BUMPER EASTER LOCKDOWN SPECIAL ISSUE

THE NEW EUROPEAN

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WE SHALL OVERCOME

THE BEST ANALYSIS OF THE BATTLE AGAINST THE VIRUS.. PLUS PLENTY TO HELP TAKE YOUR MIND OFF IT

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The real herd immunity that leaders cling to

Andrew Adonis

Whatever may or may not have been briefed or initially reported, as soon as the scale of the coronavirus pandemic became clear, the British government did not act on the basis of sacrificing tens of thousands of lives by relying on 'herd immunity'. Nor has any government internationally.

Rather what we have seen is 'political herd immunity' – by which I mean the sight, in a desperate crisis, of virtually all governments moving to similar policy responses by a rapid process of 'compare and copy'.

Within weeks, sometimes days, every country has moved from business as usual to lockdowns of extraordinarily draconian dimensions. Alongside this every country has introduced unprecedented loan and compensation schemes for loss of individual and business incomes. Now, every country is trying to get virus testing regimes up and running.

Having talked universally in recent weeks about "the Imperial College paper" – the scientific paper which suggested there might be quarter of a million deaths in the UK, 1.2 million in the US and huge numbers in every country without lockdown interventions – policy-makers are now comparing and contrasting testing regimes to end the lockdowns without another spike in coronavirus deaths. Is it South Korea or Wuhan we should all be copying?
Out of this will come the next herd-like policy.

No country's rulers want to be seen to be out of line if the consequence is a massive loss of life amid callous indifference to the spread of the virus. Trump or Merkel, Putin or Macron, the sentiment is the same. At this basic level, politicians are a herd too. They are seeking political immunity by acting together even though they all know that the consequences of the lockdowns are grim in their impact on lives and livelihoods. But they are generally thought to be less grim, or at any rate less visible, than a massive escalation in the number of virus deaths and hospitals that are visibly overwhelmed.

The differences in policy between countries, although much debated, have been second order. The Swedes have made a thing of not shutting down their schools. But in Britain we haven't shut them either: we have said they are open for 'key workers,' and most schools are still open, just as schools in Sweden are either closed or restricted as soon as cases of the virus arise.

Similarly, some financial aid packages are more generous than others. But all developed countries are funding very substantial packages, including Trump's United States, whose $2 trillion package is the largest fiscal stimulus in American history. Cheques of $1,200 are going to most American adults, bearing Trump's own signature. Remember, this is re-election year. We are all socialists now.

The tragedy is the situation of poorer countries which simply can't afford such generous universal packages. This includes Italy, still reeling from the 2008 financial crisis, which is now issuing food stamps to prevent social unrest and violence, as many families struggle with virtually no income. However, Giuseppe Conte's government is not letting up on the lockdown, for fear of a further spike in coronavirus deaths.

When the crisis subsides, huge challenges will be faced in terms of government debt and continuing business and employment damage. In Britain alone there are estimates of a £200 billion budget deficit this year as tax income vanishes as fast as the jobs required to pay it. If the lockdown persists for many months, the public debt situation will be similar to the end of a major war.

I suspect that governments will act like a herd then too. The choice will be stark – whether to continue borrowing to keep up demand and supply or to cut immediately to try and get the tax-and-spend position back to pre-crisis levels.

We have been here before. After the First World War, the international trend was towards cuts and austerity in pursuit of balanced budgets. After the Second World War, Keynes' ideas led to invest-to-produce strategies, with commitments to high employment and welfare states.

I hope, after the crisis, that we go for state investment not state austerity. History shows that investment works best and is fairest. But my hunch is that most countries will opt one way or the other, together. It's called herd immunity.

Welcome to *The New European*'s special Easter issue

This will be an Easter unlike any other – for a start, there is a lot less about Brexit in our special bumper edition than in previous years!
These are difficult times for all of us, and we hope you will benefit from our analysis of the current crisis – as well as from plenty of other articles intended to offer some relief from it.
There will be no newspaper next week but we will return, as normal, on Thursday, April 16.
It looks like the coming weeks will be a difficult and challenging time for all of us. We hope that you and your families stay safe, and that you will keep turning to *The New European*, in print and online, to stay informed, and amused, throughout this period.

With best wishes for a Happy Easter,
All at *The New European*

PS, if you have not done so already, please take advantage of our special subscription offer (see Page 3) to get the newspaper delivered to your door

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The world's war

LYSE DOUCET, the BBC's chief international correspondent, reports on the global nature of the coronavirus pandemic, and the international response needed to tackle it

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Ayadee for relief & development
2

Now we know. Now we all know what it's like to live in a war zone. At the least, we know what it's like to live in this one.

Our new lexicon speaks of this war. Our brave nurses, doctors, all caregivers are all on the "frontline" in the fight against Covid-19. PPE, the personal protective clothing now urgently needed in hospitals, takes the same name as body armour long worn by soldiers, journalists, aid workers and others in dangerous places. When loved ones go out the door, only to shop or to run, we urge them – "be safe".

Now there is a terrifying enemy who lurks, in our very midst. Even worse, it's invisible. We worry that it has left its deadly mark on supermarket shelves we touch, door handles we grab, railings we brush past. Is it hiding in the groceries which come to our door?

And, in a jarring turn, so many in so many places now speak this same language. I read Twitter posts from Afghan officials in Kabul on the need to "flatten the curve". A friend in the Middle East, forever in fear of a military conflagration, now sends a message to me in London asking "scary isn't it?"

We heard, long ago, how a butterfly flapping its wings deep in the Amazon rainforest of Brazil could spark a storm in Texas. Now, in our time, a bat flicks its wings in a wet market in Wuhan and it touches us all – from relatively wealthy industrialised nations to countries long mired in wars without end, and deadly disasters which run deep.

"We are in the same boat, all facing a tremendous storm," warns Jan Egeland, secretary general of the Norwegian Refugee Council. "It has to be all hands on deck because if one corner of the boat sinks, we are all affected."

But this is also a time, beyond compare, of every man and woman for him or herself. Even governments across Europe are scrambling to urgently purchase or produce, in the tens of thousands, more ventilators to keep people breathing.

Erecting makeshift field hospitals at speed has long been the stock in trade of emergency workers in distant disasters. Now shiny new field hospitals are rising from parking lots and sports centres across Western cities and far beyond.

"We will do our best with what we have," vows a stoic Health Ministry spokesman in Kabul who announced this week they had 10,400 beds across Afghanistan for all patients but expected that 700,000 people may need to be hospitalised, including 200,000 needing intensive care. "We wouldn't get enough beds even in 10 years," he admits, calling it a worst case scenario. Many Afghans fear far worse than that.

A common enemy which stops at no borders finds its weakest opponents on bloody battlefields, in squalid refugee camps, in crowded slums where there's no distance to keep, where not enough clean water flows from taps, where hospitals have been bombed into oblivion.

Seventy million people said to be displaced by conflicts and hardship will soon confront another evil with the scantest of protection, not even the luxury of sanitisers or soap.

There's a growing chorus of alarm fighting to be heard as this vicious virus wreaks havoc everywhere from New York to New Zealand.

"There is a double crisis," says David Miliband, Britain's former foreign secretary who is now president and CEO of the International Rescue Committee. "It is a crisis of national health systems in advanced industrialised countries and a crisis of international cooperation."

"The chance to take preventative measures for the world's most vulnerable is largely being missed," he tells me in a message from his own shelter-in-place in the United States. "But it is still do-able."

The world's leading aid agencies are warning: ignore the weakest at your peril.

"It will come back to haunt us," explains Egeland in a telephone conversation from his home in Oslo. "Our conscience will be stained but our own self-interest will also be undermined."

In a war with an anxious refrain – "when will this end?" – we're being forewarned that this crisis will rear its ugly head again, in a second, or even third wave, if left to fester in the world's most vulnerable nations.

Countries like Yemen, already battling the oldest of infectious diseases like cholera, diphtheria, and dengue, now braces itself for the onslaught of this new contagion with half of its hospitals and clinics lying in ruin. Countries like the impoverished Central African Republic, a nation of five million people, is said to have only three ventilators.

The last time when much of the world spoke the same language was precipitated by the September 11 attacks in 2001. Western leaders spoke of standing "shoulder to shoulder" with Afghans "for the long run". Governments change tack, patience runs thin, other crises erupt. Afghanistan and Iraq remind everyone large scale humanitarian interventions (these after military invasions) are hard to get right, that costly mistakes are repeatedly made, on all sides. Lessons have, hopefully, been learned.

And Syria's merciless war reminded the world that borders can't contain catastrophes: millions of desperate Syrians seized any chance of a safer, saner life elsewhere; extremist groups found ways to terrorise wherever they live, including everyone's cities.

Afghanistan is still a place where the enemy is visible and audible: war planes still screech across the skies; Taliban and now Islamic State suicide attackers still strike without warning. Afghan friends have often told me, without a trace of pathos, that when they leave home in the morning they're not sure they'll be back at the end of the day.

"The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war," declared UN secretary general Antonio Guterres last week as he implored warring parties around the world to lay down their arms in support of a bigger battle against the common enemy of Covid-19.

Good can come out of bad. Warring sides in Yemen issued encouraging statements which were, however, soon eclipsed by audacious missile attacks and blistering aerial bombardments. In Colombia, the left wing National Liberation Army, the ELM, declared a unilateral ceasefire as an "humanitarian gesture". In Afghanistan, the Taliban carried out some 300 strikes last week, while vowing to work with aid workers to fight this God-given virus rather than attack them as in the past.

The world's top table, the UN Security Council, hasn't met yet to forge a collective response to this corona crisis, even to sound the same big bell of alarm. Even if they did, via a state-of the-art app, great powers may get bogged down in age-old accusations of who's to blame for this calamity.

"In my view, while the 'world is on pause,' there has never been a better time to consult, coordinate and cooperate," Canada's minister of foreign affairs François-Philippe Champagne texts me while, like many other foreign ministers, he focuses on "managing the biggest repatriation of citizens in peace time in Canada's history".

"We must also keep an eye on the strategic imperative of the post-Covid-19 world and the functioning of Western institutions which for 75 years ensured peace, stability, and prosperity to the world," he insists. In a world where there are many who say "my country first," not all would agree.

If they don't, we may all be last.

Last week, a two billion US dollar UN appeal to stop Covid-19 from "circling back around the globe" was also launched. At the time of writing, it had received about 364 million dollars in donations from Japan, Kuwait, Germany, the European Commission and the UN's own Central Emergency Response Fund.

This war of our time has been shot through with many fears. First, there was fear of fear itself: don't exaggerate; don't make the panic worse than the pandemic.

GLOBAL ENEMY: White Helmets from the Syrian Civil Defence disinfect tents and makeshift homes as a preventive measure against the Covid-19 pandemic in Idlib on March 24

Photo: Getty Images

Now there's worry this cure of a crushing lockdown throwing people out of work may be worse than this most deadly of diseases. We fear too the aching heartbreak of triage in a desperate survival of the fittest. And now there's this warning that, even if we 'flatten the curve', a failure to flatten the vast gap between countries' medical might may shatter any impending relief and joy.

When cafes and companies open, when people whose money has long run out finally get back to work, when we finally savour that delicious moment of going out again with dear family and friends – we may be sent back into our homes when the curse of corona strikes again.

On Thought for the Day, on the BBC's Radio 4 *Today* programme, writer and theologian Martin Wroe noted that one of the most recurring phrases in our new lexicon is "when this is all over".

But he cautioned that after this "global near-death experience" we should not want to go back to normal when this is all over "because normal was already not working for most people most of the time". Not working for many in our own society; not working for many far beyond.

In many conflicts of our time, "when will it all end?" has been a lament with no reply, year in year out. Now we're all staring into the same abyss, unable to answer this question.

■ Lyse Doucet is the BBC's chief international correspondent and a presenter for BBC World News and World Service

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20 reasons to look on the bright side

Alastair Campbell

Editor-at-Large

A few years ago, I wrote a short book, *The Happy Depressive*, in which I went through a few of my life rules. To one of them I gave the clunky label GGOOB – Get Good Out Of Bad. It is the mindset that says that in every setback there is an opportunity.

To give a very current example – since the Covid crisis began, and we have largely been confined to home, my sleep patterns have gone haywire. I am getting to bed early, before 10 most nights, and nodding off a few pages in (currently reading a huge, excellent novel called *The Episode* by Stan Abbott;) but then waking just after 3am. I doze a bit but don't really sleep and give up around half four.

So – nightmare. Well, yes. But GGOOB! Peace and quiet. See the sun come up. Hear the birds wake up. Read more of *The Episode*. Write more.

I have been pretty productive these past few days, especially in those early hours. And one the dawn pieces I wrote was this, my 20 reasons to look on the bright side. And how grown up of me not to include Brexit and the extra challenges it faces among them.

1. Cleaner air. I know this is not much comfort if you work in aviation, and the economic impact of the hit on airlines is huge. But it is so nice to be able to look up into the sky and it looks, sounds and feels so much cleaner. My asthma has been better as a result.

2. Louder birdsong. Maybe this is just because it is now spring. But I don't think so. I. think the birds are happier, because of Point 1, the cleaner air.

3. Everyone is talking about trees. OK, 'everyone' may be an exaggeration. But people are definitely noticing the natural world more. For some time, I have been posting Tree of the Day pictures on social media. When I started, I sensed people thought I was going off on one of my eccentric ones. Now I get people messaging if I haven't posted them by lunchtime.

4. More kindness. You will always have plonkers, and the people deliberately spitting at the police, and the super-knobs licking food and putting it back onto shelves will hopefully get done, if not in this life then thereafter perhaps. But the knobs and plonkers are way outnumbered by the kind and the caring. I could have done without the young girl who asked me if I needed help getting the shopping (what with me being so superfit) but she meant well.

5. More volunteering. Back before a decade of austerity and Brexit combined to destroy so much of what is good about Britain, you may remember the London 2012 Olympics, when Boris Johnson did a fantastic job taking credit for the work of others. That Olympic spirit sparked the greatest positivity I have felt in the country since, dare I say, the election of New Labour in 1997. I went to loads of events at the Olympics and Paralympics and the volunteers were a massive part of the success. So it is great that so many have volunteered to help take some of the strain off NHS workers.

6. More respect for so-called unskilled workers. So who are the people we need the most right now then? Well, the hospitals are not kept clean without cleaners, are they? Care homes can't function without carers. It's a shame it has taken a pandemic for so many people to realise it.

7. More appreciation for NHS staff. I did like the comment from a German, watching our 'clap the NHS' national effort last Thursday: "We don't clap our health service. We fund it." And I must confess to feeling a bit queasy at some of the Tories singing its praises when the last time I saw them doing an NHS clap was to applaud when they 'won' the battle to stop a pay rise for nurses. But the country has given, yet again, a clear message about how much they value our NHS.

8. More solidarity for others nations. Bad... the international coordination has been woeful, yet another scar that nationalism, populism and Donald Trump have inflicted on the world. Good... people have showed so much solidarity to the hardest hit countries, Italy and Spain in particular.

9. More sharing of funny memes and videos. A shout-out here to boxing promoter Frank Warren. He has been averaging a dozen a day and some of them have been brilliant. Another sports figure, Burnley midfielder Ashley Westwood, gave me the best laugh though. A picture of a dog standing defiantly on top of the kitchen cupboards, and saying: "No, I'm not coming down… I've been walked by everyone in this f***ing family today". And his message: "Is this Skye?" Skye is my dog.

10. My dog is so happy. Fiona and I are home 24 hours a day and the only time we leave the house is to take Skye for a walk. She is happier than any dog has ever been, in the history of dogdom.

11. Event cancellations. On the one hand, I have seen my income collapse with every paid gig in the diary gone between now and June. On the other, what joy not to have to find an excuse not to go to events you never wanted to go to in the first place. And please, spare me this guff about virtual dinner parties.

12. More time for music. It is a bad idea to have your head in the news all day and all night, so if you have time, listen to music, and even better play music. I've been getting my bagpipes out every day and (see Point 7) piped our next-door neighbour home from her work as a nurse on Thursday.

13. More time for books. Let's be honest, present company excepted, reading most newspapers is a waste of time. We have more time for books now. I for one have been using it.

14. Down the line TV is compulsory. Two benefits here. For the viewer, you get to see people's bookshelves; and, if you are an interviewee, you can do the interview from home. Normally they badger you to go into the studio. Now they are banning you. Bonus.

15. Weird stuff happens. I spring cleaned my office. I had a duster. I used a vacuum cleaner (not a Dyson). I even wiped the spines of all the books on the shelves. I am not proud to say it but this is the first time I have ever done this, or anything like it. Weird.

16. Strange new enterprises spring up. My partner Fiona has developed her own hand sanitiser. Main ingredients: alcohol, aloe vera and lavender. She has filled every spray bottle we have ever had with it, one in every room. I keep telling her to copyright it and market it before someone else does. My hands are pissed and smell of lavender.

17. Burnley are basically league champions. Having gone seven games without defeat, our unbeaten run looks like stretching for some weeks if not months. Added to which manager Sean Dyche was the last pre-Covid Manager of the Month, and Matej Vydra scored the last pre-Covid Goal of the Month, so at the very least we should be awarded a Champions League place.

18. Old football is back. Bad... no live sport. Good... they are showing some great old stuff. It was great to see some of the old FA Cup quarter-finals in mudbaths, and fantastic to see Scotland hammer San Marino 2-0.

19. Olympic opportunity. Bad... the Games in Tokyo been postponed. Good... think of the 17- or 18-year-old for whom it might mean the extra year leads to a selection they didn't expect, and they win gold. You watch, there will be a few of them and come the games in 2021, as the medal goes round their neck, and the commentator tells their back story, I can turn to Fiona and Skye and say "I told you that would happen".

20. New book ideas. *Tree of the Day, the Alastair Campbell compilation… Alastair Campbell's 20-point plans for everything…* I'm having to fight off the publishers. Have a lovely Easter.

If Europe fails, who will succeed?

JOHN KAMPFNER on the EU's faltering response to the coronavirus crisis. And why it still offers the greatest hope for a solution

Dismiss the warnings of the Europhobe at your peril. For years, mainstream politicians in the UK ignored the noises from Nigel Farage until it was too late, until he had hijacked the entire system.

Last week, Italy's Matteo Salvini declared: "This is a den of snakes and jackals. First, we defeat the virus, then remember Europe. And, if necessary, we say goodbye."

Salvini is out of government, for the moment. Unceremoniously dumped last year from his position as interior minister after forcing elections which he lost, the man who would be Il Duce is waiting to strike back.

He knows it won't be long. With Italy on its knees, with its Covid-19 dead accounting for a third of the global total, a political and economic reckoning is around the corner.

It is likely to be ugly. Salvini and extremists like him will inevitably be the beneficiaries.

It had become received wisdom to say that all of Europe had learnt from Brexit.

No matter how rabid their anti-establishment messaging might be, none of the continent's far-right or far-left groupings would go so far as to demand withdrawal from the European Union any more.

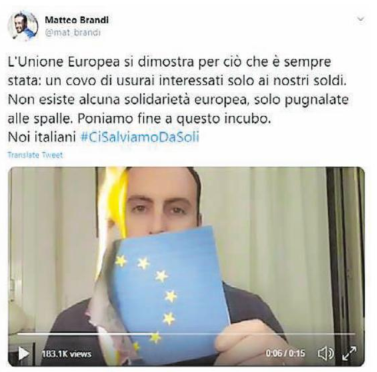
They had had ringside seats to the spectacle of four years of chaos in the UK and that was enough to bring them to their senses.

Coronavirus may have swung the argument back again. Increased hostility to the EU project may be one of the many far-reaching consequences.

Salvini had chosen his words carefully. He had seen the fury on social media, he had watched the YouTube videos of Italians sitting at home in front of their laptops, ceremoniously burning the EU flag while playing their own national anthem.

He clearly believes that such is Italy's sense of betrayal at seemingly being left to cope with the pandemic on its own, public opinion is shifting towards exit.

Is this wishful thinking? Hubris? Disinformation controlled from Moscow and Beijing? Or is the European Union at the point of no return?



Matteo Brandi
@mat_brandi

L'Unione Europea si dimostra per ciò che è sempre stata: un covo di usurai interessati solo ai nostri soldi. Non esiste alcuna solidarietà europea, solo pugnalate alle spalle. Poniamo fine a questo incubo.
Noi italiani #CiSalviamoDaSoli

FURY: Italians burned the EU flag amid claims of betrayal Photo: Twitter

1
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DISUNITED:
1 Two migrants from Sri Lanka wearing protective masks pass anti-European Union graffiti on an Athens university building during Greece's nationwide lockdown to contain the spread of Covid-19 on March 27 Photo: Getty Images

Over the past decade the EU has twice been close to rupture – over the Greek sovereign debt battle that culminated in 2010 and the refugee influx of 2015.

On both occasions, the unity of the bloc was frayed; on both occasions the Germans were blamed.

Now it's more of a sense of member states going it alone. Where they are acting collectively, it is back to the North versus the South (and vice versa).

In the first weeks of the crisis, the institutions were cast to the side lines. Although health, like terrorism, is technically not within the EU's purview, this was a crucial opportunity, when a coordinated strategy would have made a big difference practically and politically.

Instead the initial instinct of the key players, Germany and France, was to fend for themselves, imposing export bans on critical medical goods, re-nationalising supply chains and closing borders.

Others followed suit. On the 25th anniversary of border-free travel – one of the four fundamental freedoms – every EU country with the exception of Ireland had closed or put restrictions on its frontier.

Member states had previously suspended Schengen, but only briefly and not *en masse*.

This time it was universal, the worst possible symbol, even if unavoidable in the circumstances.

The biggest fault line – as is invariably the case – has been over money. In February, member states had failed to agree a new seven-year budget and how to plug the financial gap left by the UK.

Last week, when they met for an emergency video-conference to discuss Covid-19, EU leaders didn't just fail to agree. They fell out spectacularly and in public.

Italy and Spain had called for all-European bonds, so-called 'coronabonds', to be issued to raise hundreds of billions through issuing debt shared across the 27.

The Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte led the charge of the Frugal North against the Profligate South.

No meant no, he said after the meeting broke up. "It would mean you would cross the line, the Rubicon, into a eurozone that is more of a transfer union."

This had been the same argument proffered towards Greece a decade ago, pushing that country, and the Union, to the brink. This time the stakes are even higher. Portugal's prime minister, Antonio Costa, shot back: "This type of response is completely ignorant, and this recurring pettiness completely undermines what makes up the spirit of the European Union," he said.

The usually unflappable president of the European Central Bank, Christine Lagarde, had earlier suggested it was not the bank's job to help Italy.

Her technical but tone-deaf argument – it was not the bank's role to "close the spreads" between 10-year German and Italian bonds – led to the largest daily increase on record on yields for Italian debt.

WAR IN EUROPE:
2 A Russian military vehicle at a care facility for the elderly in Lombardy, Italy. Russia has sent military experts to Italy to help with disinfecting buildings in the fight against Covid-19

2 Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban presents his controversial Coronavirus Bill to parliament in Budapest on March 30

Photos: Getty Images

Meanwhile, the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, rebuked member states for looking out for themselves. "When Europe really needed to prove that this is not only a fair-weather union, too many initially refused to share their umbrella."

Europe, she said, was now stepping up.

A series of measures, previously unthinkable, have been introduced: strict anti-state aid rules have been dropped. The ECB has begun a huge EU-wide 750 billion euro bond-buying plan. Austerity has gone out of the window.

The next days and weeks will see EU leaders, their ministers and officials holding ever more frequent conference calls to chart a way out of the mire, and to find better means of coordinating member states' responses.

What credibility will the EU have when it is all over? What pulling power will it be able to exercise?

It has been in the margins not just of the logistical and financial response, but also the politics.

All countries have introduced emergency measures, forcing populations to stay indoors, requisitioning key assets, closing borders and deploying new technologies to track movements.

None has gone as far as the perpetual outlier, Hungary, in exploiting the crisis to clamp down yet further on civil liberties.

Prime minister Viktor Orban, who takes pleasure in infuriating his critics, presented his draconian Coronavirus Bill to parliament in spite of protests from the EU and Council of Europe.

He has spent years defying Brussels, in the knowledge that nothing he does earns more than rhetorical criticism.

All the while, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping are enjoying the EU's travails.

Russia is in the early stage of the corona curve and has its own problems. But over the past few years it has spared no effort in its attempts to undermine the EU, in supporting extremist parties and mounting a huge disinformation campaign.

China's approach has been more strategic and long-term. Now that it is re-emerging from the worst of the pandemic, it is turning the tables, seeking to peel off countries like Italy and Hungary by providing medical and financial aid.

This is a "global battle of narratives", declared the EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell, using strikingly undiplomatic language. China's "politics of generosity", he said, was part of an overarching struggle for influence. "Armed with the facts, we need to defend Europe against its detractors".

That led to a five-page pamphlet, setting out all the work the EU is doing to combat the virus. It will take far more than that for the EU to wrest back credibility, among its members and further afield. Corona will leave not just families, communities and regions devastated.

A new army of unemployed, impoverished and disillusioned will provide rich pickings for the populists.

Economic and social reconstruction akin to the Marshall Plan will be required, for Italy, Spain, indeed for all member states.

Does the EU as a project, as a value proposition, have what it takes to deliver that? The first phase of its response does not bode well, but there is still a chance. This will be a very long haul.

EU's underlying health issues

This crisis exposed Brussels' failure to surpass the nation state, says RUBÉN GARRIDO-YSERTE, and underlined the need for swifter action

What the economic downturn that began in 2008 did not achieve, could be managed by a microorganism. The outbreak and spread of the coronavirus across Europe has revealed a previous illness that had been incubating in the European Union for years.

That earlier crisis plunged Europeans into deep pessimism and encouraged populism. It led to calls for the EU to develop a true sense of belonging for its citizens.

Today, we find no sense of belonging in the European management of Covid-19. The EU has for years been in search of a way to surpass an old institution, the nation state. But the fight against this virus is being waged at national, not European level.

The European Commission has limited its involvement, and member states have approached the outbreak individually. The Schengen Agreement has effectively been suspended. There has been a moratorium on the enforcement of the macroeconomic stability and balance of public accounts commitments. Brussels has merely let go, but done little else.

It is no coincidence that the virus has concentrated in old Europe. Globalisation has taken it from the great factory of the world to the West, where it continued on its deadly path. This virus confronts an ageing and suffering Europe, but also an EU that is losing the race for technological leadership in a world suddenly fast-tracked to digital and remote solutions.

If the Asian management of the pandemic has taught us something, it is the importance of new technologies. The digital revolution is not only a source of progress and competitiveness led by China and the United States. It has proved to be fundamental when it comes to controlling the virus and giving instructions to the population. The mobile phone has been almost more useful than masks. But the EU has been found wanting in both cases.

We have learned from other crises. Austerity measures have been relaxed and the European Central Bank has announced unprecedented measures. But monetary policy is not enough.

The forecasts of the Purchasing Management Index (PMI), an index of the prevailing direction of economic trends in the manufacturing and service sectors, published late last month, shows three things: That Covid-19 has brought the largest drop in this index since records began, much greater than that experienced with the 2008 crisis; it projects performance in the future worsening, indicating that the contraction may last longer than the initial shock; that there is a strongly asymmetric impact between various European countries, in a very clear core-periphery pattern.

Given these results, the usual question arises: how is monetary union going to handle such an intense shock? So far there has been no agreement on European fiscal policy, but it is absolutely necessary to start this conversation.

People like José M González-Páramo, a former member of the executive board of the European Central Bank, and María José Álvarez Gil, a leading Spanish academic, have written in depth on macroeconomic stability, integration and debt in the eurozone. They suggest that nation states have little room to carry out independent economic policies in a globalised world. There is, they indicate, an incompatibility of maintaining national financial regulation and supervision policies with the monetary union and financial stability rules of the eurozone. National regulation framework entails a strong connection between the worsening of a country's debt capacity and the situation of its own financial system.

Politically, national budgetary and fiscal policies cannot be maintained if a genuine monetary and banking union aspires to have democratic legitimacy. This is where we are now. On the one hand, economic agents (the markets) expect clear and forceful responses from the authorities (including from those of the EU). And they expect that the EU will anticipate events and prepare responses. However, when governments meet at EU summits, they speak and plan. But taking joint actions in fast moving situations often appears beyond them.

When future data of countries' fiscal imbalances driven from direct spending caused by the management of the pandemic become public or when the fall in productive activity deteriorates public accounts, what will be the response of the EU? Will the markets be calm when the financing needs of already heavily indebted countries increase and they try to place more debt? Will the risk premium return to startle our markets?

Today, there are only national responses to a global problem. And what Europe needs are community responses in all areas, including macroeconomics.

The EU has relaxed the macroeconomic supervision mechanisms but still delays on making a decision on the 'risk sharing' scheme: joint debt issuance, European coverage mechanisms… and it is necessary to know how and who paid the pandemics bills.

European citizens deserve a European Union that protects them, not an absent zombie. Populism and eurosceptic nationalisms lurk, and today, more than ever, a stronger and reliable EU is needed – one that can react to crises more rapidly.

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Police must understand we need quarantine by consent

METROPOLITAN POLICE
POLICE

JAMES BALL'S DECONSTRUCTED

In the days shortly before the UK government eventually decided to lock down much of the country – which was still only a handful of weeks ago, even if it feels much longer – it faced substantial criticism for its apparent delay and indecision over what course of action it should take.

Faced with the rapidly rising death toll in Italy, especially in Lombardy, many – reasonably – saw only one sensible course of action in front of them: to take similar strict quarantine measures as urgently as possible, to try to keep the UK tally below that of Italy, even at that early stage.

The government never offered a single clear public explanation for its thinking, leading to a vacuum which let dark rumours stir.

The explanations briefed out via the lobby generally seemed to centre either on the UK modelling suggesting it was still premature to enact strict social distancing measures – until the calculations in the Imperial College model changed – and fears that if the UK locked down too early, citizens would run out of patience and fail to comply with the government's instructions at the most critical moment.

The immediate response to the government simply asking people to stay home, while not taking action to force or even recommend pubs, cafes, theatres, and similar venues to close, could certainly act to reinforce that view.

Far too many people simply carried on going out, seemingly either unaware of the government advice, or not bothered by it.

This even continued after the venues closed, with scenes at weekends showing people packing into parks, flocking into food markets, and thronging in malls. We shouldn't jump to villainise such people – they are more a sign that something has gone wrong with the messaging, or the strategy, than fools to be mocked.

The government guidance was changing seemingly daily, was extremely complex, and at least initially was backed up by almost nothing in the way of mass-scale public information campaigns.

But the early signs certainly didn't seem to suggest a nation was waiting to happily comply with instructions to radically change its way of life, and largely shut itself down to nothing but the absolute essentials.

Given that backdrop, the early days of the lockdown seem to have gone as well as could be possibly expected.

Civil society doesn't seem on the edge of breakdown, many more people are staying home, supermarkets are enforcing social distancing and communities are supporting people unable to leave home due to shielding requirements.

Those changes are borne out in the statistics: official figures suggest around 70% fewer motor journeys are happening than usual (impressive given lots of food supplies travel by road freight), national rail passenger figures are down more than 80% and Tube users down 90%. People who should stay home overwhelmingly seem to be staying home.

Against this calm backdrop, reports that some in the police and public authorities seem to be overreacting feel fairly trivial – a source of news to roll your eyes at, more than a source of real worry.

The individual instances are petty enough. The Association of Convenience Stores, which represents the country's corner shops, complained that over-zealous environmental protection officers had been warning store owners against selling Easter eggs – saying that these were "non-essential".

Sure enough the officials were enforcing an imaginary law, and an imaginary piece of guidance, and weary press officers at 10 Downing Street quickly batted it down, stressing that if a shop had been deemed 'essential' and so could remain open – which corner shops had – it could sell whatever it usually sold.

Similar over-zealousness abounds. In Edgware, footage emerged of a police officer berating a shop worker who was chalking the pavement to mark how customers could queue while remaining appropriately distanced from one another. The retailer reasonably noted it was chalk, would wash out, and was serving to enforce government guidelines to keep people safe. The officer rebutted with the fact there is a law against chalking pavements, and what would happen if we ignored laws like that at a time of crisis? Sadly for him even his own superiors were not impressed by that reasoning when the footage emerged, and no ticket for criminal damage was issued.

There will always be problems with individuals when they are given new

WEIRD: Derbyshire police dyed a lagoon near Buxton black to deter people from visiting the beauty spot
Photo: Facebook

powers or a new rulebook. Some are fussy and pedantic, sticking to the letter of what is in front of them instead of its purpose.

Some – very reasonably – will be confused by the complexity of the government guidance, and how it often goes further than, or even contradicts, what's in the actual laws they have passed, though it is of course their job to know the letter of the law. And a small minority appear to simply enjoy enforcing rules and imposing power on others.

That is sad enough at an individual level, but can quickly become disturbing when it rises to the level of becoming institutional. This seems to be happening with Derbyshire police, who first posted social media footage taken from a police drone of citizens doing such nefarious things as walking their dog, or stopping to take a photo while walking.

The force's reasoning in that instance was that these groups were breaking a law Derbyshire police seem to have imagined, against driving to exercise – which at the time wasn't even against government advice.

The force then compounded their weird behaviour by posting that they had dyed a natural beauty spot – an azure blue pond – black, to dissuade people from swimming in it, during the coronavirus crisis. Given the pool is actually alkaline run-off from an old quarry and dangerous to swim in, the force has actually been dyeing it for years, why pretend now it's a quarantine measure?

Most police forces aren't behaving anything like Derbyshire – they understand the need for a calm approach, appealing to reason and to people's better nature.

We will need those types of officer to prevail if the UK is to sustain a lockdown that will save lives.

One week shut in at home is almost a treat. It becomes something quite different as people are forced to live off either diminished earnings or none at all, with no social releases, cooped in with the same people, having to queue 40 minutes every time they need to go to the supermarket. The honeymoon phase of quarantine is rapidly coming to its end.

Sustaining it beyond that needs a sense of shared purpose, that we're doing this for each other, and that we're all in it together. Fostering that has, in theory at least, been at the core of policing since its earliest days. Policing by consent has been codified in the UK's system since at least 1829.

Even back then, new constables were handed a set of nine principles, including that "the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect".

Police are never supposed to be our overlords – they are supposed to be citizens in uniform, representatives of the people, not of government.

Trying to live up to this perhaps impossible standard is more important now than it has been for decades. If quarantine is something that feels imposed on us, first by diktat and then by force, it will fail – and coronavirus will surge.

We all need to remember what, and who, we're doing this for. Police should be helping to remind the public of that – not the other way around.

MIXED MESSAGE: A police officer speaks to a member of the public in London's Greenwich Park on March 26 following the government's lockdown to help stop the spread of coronavirus

Photo: Getty Images

Should we social distance from our social media?

WhatsApp, Facebook and the rest are playing a central role in this crisis. EMMA LUCK asks if they help or hinder

Even for those who might have described themselves as social media sceptics, the coronavirus crisis seems to be driving more of us to rely on it.

People who were previously avowed technophobes have swiftly become devotees of apps like Zoom and Houseparty, while more established platforms like WhatsApp, Twitter and Facebook have taken on added significance.

The reasons are obvious: social media is connecting people at a time when literally nothing else is. These apps, all in their different ways, are providing lifelines, keeping people in touch with friends and family and combating loneliness.

At the same time, they are helping to educate and inform. Users are bombarded with various public safety messages, about washing their hands, staying indoors and – when not – how to maintain social distance.

Social media is also helping in more targeted ways – getting specific messages around local communities and encouraging people to work together. Facebook, for instance, is awash with community campaigns, established to check on the vulnerable, help with shopping and medical supplies and make sure local needs are met.

There are other practical roles being performed by these platforms too. For the beleaguered children of the UK (and to the relief of their equally beleaguered parents), it has enabled them to enter virtual classrooms to continue their learning from their living rooms. It is also helping people to keep active and healthy, with exercise and cookery classes of every variety now available.

And there is another incredibly important role which should not be overlooked: humour. Social media platforms are brimming with witty pictures, videos, playlists and jokes. Cynics might sneer, but the uplifting feelgood factor these generate has been hugely beneficial to our mental wellbeing and resilience.

Social media has done plenty to boost morale and provide shared moments that lift and unite the country through this crisis, in a way that TV has, thus far, failed to do. It was social media which was at the forefront of the 'Clap for Carers' initiative, for instance.

So there is plenty of to be thankful to these platforms for in these challenging times. But there is also an undoubted flip side to them too. While social media is doubtless helping to get important messages disseminated, it is also helping to spread less helpful ones. Fake news and hoaxes were a problem long before this virus came along, but have taken on a particularly sinister aspect now.

One message quickly went viral on Facebook describing a self-check for Covid-19. It stated that people can test themselves every day by attempting to hold their breath for 10 seconds. If they could do this without coughing, discomfort, stiffness or tightness, it was claimed that they did not have the virus. The test – which has the capacity to seriously mislead, with severe consequences – has been discredited by medics, but not before it travelled widely around the world.

Less malign, but also damaging for some, have been the many anecdotal, anonymous reports circulating online from medics describing the conditions that they are facing in hospitals. The testimony may be genuine – it is impossible to tell – while the underlying message for people to stay indoors is certainly helpful and the desire to retweet and share them is entirely understandable. But is the anxiety, fear and panic they provoke in many people really necessary or constructive? For some, perhaps. For others, perhaps not.

Social media can also hinder rather than help in other ways – for instance in fuelling the 'panic buying' sprees we saw earlier in the crisis.

When well-meaning people censoriously tweeted pictures of empty supermarket shelves to condemn so-called "panic buyers", they surely only added to the problem, encouraging other well-meaning and otherwise responsible people to race out to stock up before it was too late. In reality, the actual number of 'irresponsible' panic buyers was perhaps relatively low – more common was surely those who became anxious at all the reports and photographs and feared being left with nothing. But that was not the impression given on social media, where there must always be someone to blame and an online posse rounded up to blame them.

Indeed, the pandemic has produced an outbreak of public shaming not seen since white feathers were handed out during the First World War. It started with panic buying but has continued with controversies over people getting their regular daily exercise and keeping the appropriate social distance.

> “ **These are trying times for everyone. Most people are doing their utmost to live within the bizarre new rules. But you wouldn't get this impression from much of social media which has divided the world**

These are trying times for everyone. Most people are doing their utmost to live within the bizarre new rules. But you wouldn't get this impression from much of social media which has divided the world between those adjudged to be behaving in the right way and those not – "Covidiots".

There are, of course, some people who deserve to fall into this category. But there are many who are incurring the wrath of social media simply because they are interpreting the rules differently while trying to do their best.

It is not easy to know exactly what the proper course of action is. Just ask MP Stephen Kinnock, ticked off by South Wales Police – on Twitter, of course – for visiting his father, former Labour leader Neil, on his birthday and sitting apart from him.

For many of those online, the new rules – and apparent infringements – offer an opportunity to indulge long-standing pet hates, whether against dog walkers, joggers, cyclists or Labour MPs. Sometimes, those being shamed are being singled out because we can't identify which group they belong to.

Social media has been groaning under the weight of photos and footage of crowded Tube trains and platforms – the inference being that everyone travelling is a Covidiot, regardless of how many might actually be key workers. It is not always easy to spot a nurse, a binman or a supermarket shelf stacker on their way into work, not that social media seems to care. Shame is the game. 'But it helps to spread the message,' say the shamers. But a lot of situations are more nuanced than the shamers allow. Is all this enthusiastic and sometimes vicious online 'policing' really helping to keep public order and maintain national morale, or is it just dividing people?

One problem is that social media has not had time to recover from the Brexit era (whether it ever will is another matter). That deep schism still hasn't healed online. People are still divided pretty neatly into groups of like-minded followers, with similar 'blocked' lists. Not much crosses between bubbles and social media responses follow party and political lines. So at on the one hand the news of Boris Johnson's illness is met by his online opponents with glee. And on the other, Jeremy Corbyn's participation in the 'Clap for Carers' is dismissed by his critics as showboating and grandstanding.

There are certainly a number of Twitter accounts which have emerged to give neutral, dispassionate advice and commentary on coronavirus. But the platform's loudest voices are still those with an opinion. And, frankly, we need science and advice more than opinion right now.

So, there's good and bad to social media in the coronavirus era. At its best, it unites like little else can at the moment. At its worst, it divides, stirs anxiety and sows confusion. It must come with a strong health warning then. And a suggestion that users exercise due social distancing from its downsides.

No time for sideshow mob

MICHAEL WHITE ON THE WEEK BLUSTER ON EU TRADE TALKS RATHER MISSED THE POINT..

With every day that passes this gets weirder and weirder, doesn't it? Barely a month ago we could scarcely imagine that most of the country would now be under curfew at home, actually a third of the planet and rising.

The world's great city centres are largely deserted, its industries idle. In Britain, remote, much-loved beauty spots are patrolled by police officers. Visitors are greeted with "Go Home, Rats" posters drawn by locals who would normally embrace them and their money. Money, what money? The global economy is haemorrhaging and the global poor are most at risk.

With significant variations and outliers – we'll come back to them – the picture is broadly similar in most of the developed countries most of us know. Traffic trickles along my nearby motorway, the flightpath into Heathrow has gone quiet. Our robin has returned to the balcony. My wife saw a blue tit there, a neighbour spotted a sparrowhawk. I haven't been to the supermarket for 10 days. Nature stages a comeback, so does crime as humanity stumbles into a vast experiment, economic, social, environmental, political.

When will it end? Nobody knows. How will it end, well or badly? Ditto. It could be a blip, a rapid V-shape recovery that sends everyone to the beach next summer – that's 2021, of course, when the Tokyo Olympics are rescheduled to take place – giddy with relief. Or an oil price below $20 and all other disturbing signals could presage an apocalypse as societies slowly unravel into poverty and chaos, mixing the dystopian nightmares of JG Ballard or Cormac McCarthy with a splash of Thomas Hobbes. At moments like this fear is the driver, but only if we let it take back control.

Born in the Spanish Armada year of 1588, Hobbes, the philosopher of the English civil war (1642-9) knew only too well that in a profound crisis people will often opt for 'security' over liberty, a social contract that empowers an absolute monarch – a Louis XIV, not a Charles II – in his own remedy.

UK polls already confirm that instinct in the current crisis, where 80% would give up rights, a slippery slope cloaked by the natural impulse to unity. You do not carp when staring at eternity. At Jeremy Corbyn's last pre-Starmer session of PMQs, even Boris tried to be kind.

* * *

At least high-end lawyers like Lord Sumption QC have stirred a civil liberties vs police state debate about over-zealous police 'guidance' and the absence of proper parliamentary accountability. We're not just talking China or Russia's predictable enthusiasm (Derbyshire police too?) for a Covid Curtain complete with drone and mobile phone tracking surveillance.

Inside the European Union this week the Hungarian parliament foolishly voted time-unlimited, rule-by-decree powers to Viktor Orban, including five-year sentences for publishing 'fake news'. That's likely to be the true but inconvenient kind. We have it too. "Fix Testing Fiasco NOW," roared Wednesday's *Daily Mail*. Ominous for Johnson.

* * *

What will be done about Budapest's transgressions? Not much, I suspect. In the circumstances it is almost comic to raise the question of No.10's trade talks with the EU's Michel Barnier. The official position remains that the government still sees no need to postpone its painfully-tight December 31 'transition' deadline for a Canada deal, an Australian deal or any kind of deal. But that was before the World King himself succumbed to "mild symptoms" of the Covid-19 bug, quickly followed by health secretary Hancock. Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Whitty, along with Dominic Cummings and EU trade negotiator, David Frost, are self-isolating too. Very Brexity, you may feel, but practice what you preach at the rest of us, chaps!

With MEPs (and the SNP) urging such a course, the saintly Martin Lewis, the personal finance expert and philanthropist, is asking his 785,000 Twitter followers to say whether they'd accept a postponement or not, sensibly suggesting they also tick the box to indicate if they were Remain or Leave voters in 2016. Most of his followers were Remain, he mildly notes. That figures. Remainers tend to think more in terms of economic consequences than will o' the wisp sovereignty.

In fact the next scheduled round of talks (200 officials involved on both sides) has already been postponed – 10 days ago – due to illness (Barnier's Covid-19 included) and the impracticality of serious preparation by officials who are not only video-conferencing from home but preoccupied with combatting the coronavirus pandemic. That also goes for British businesses. Most are currently struggling to find ways of staying afloat – many won't make it – and can hardly be asked to prepare for new, as yet unknown trade terms at the same time. There just isn't the bandwidth here or in Brussels.

So it's safe to predict that, if we're all still here when the pandemic becomes manageable by some means – testing, vaccines, herd immunity or all three – the transition deadline will be postponed, perhaps by a year or even two. There's no urgent need for Johnson to say so because any excuses will be dismissed as part of a deep-laid Remoaner plot to keep Britain in the EU (actually, we've left, Nigel) by the usual suspects.

Last week the *Express* whipped up a 'poll' that purported to show that 86% of voters want the negotiations to continue. When the Covid-19 casualty rates keep on rising even the *Express*'s elderly readers may get the point. Amid so many distressing funerals – no proper services, no consoling hugs that may kill – the right moment will come for Boris to bury his own bad news. Things will get worse before they get better, he conceded this week. Is the glib optimism finally maturing?

Several obvious points flow from this neglected sub-plot. One is that Brussels now has more urgent problems to worry about. Another is that the UK's opportunity cost of avoidable distractions have just doubled. We learned this week from various newspapers – the *Sunday Borisgraph* as well as the *Guardian* – that ministers passed up on the opportunity to stockpile protective safety glasses for health workers on cost grounds when the NHS budget was under pressure in 2017. They'd reached the same conclusion in 2007. In 2016 they had run a three-day Exercise Cygnus (was *cygnus* Sir Humphry's black swan joke?) to see how hospitals would cope with a major flu or other pandemic.

Not well, they concluded, but failed either to publish the results or to take restorative action. I should point out that Jeremy Hunt, who has the *TNE* stamp of approval (second class) as a level-headed pro-Remainer, was in charge at health and is currently doing useful work promoting the case for more testing.

It was already obvious in 2016-17 that Brexit was sucking up most of Whitehall's available energy, the referendum followed by Theresa May's dud election and a negotiating stalemate. But Andy Burnham faced similar distractions as health secretary during the 2009 swine flu epidemic and took more decisive action – after early mistakes the Manchester mayor now admits, as he gently chides ministers for acting too slowly.

And that's likely to be the nub of history's verdict when we – or a public inquiry – look back on Covid-19: insufficient contingency planning in a country which had recently gone through 'mad cow disease' and foot-and-mouth outbreaks. Complacency and the Brexit distraction of Boris's "Get Brexit Done" election and dash to the January 31 departure gate meant that ministers minds were on other things, including the threat of a reshuffle hanging over them. It came at the time when communist China finally admitted a human-to-human Covid-19 problem in Wuhan on January 20.

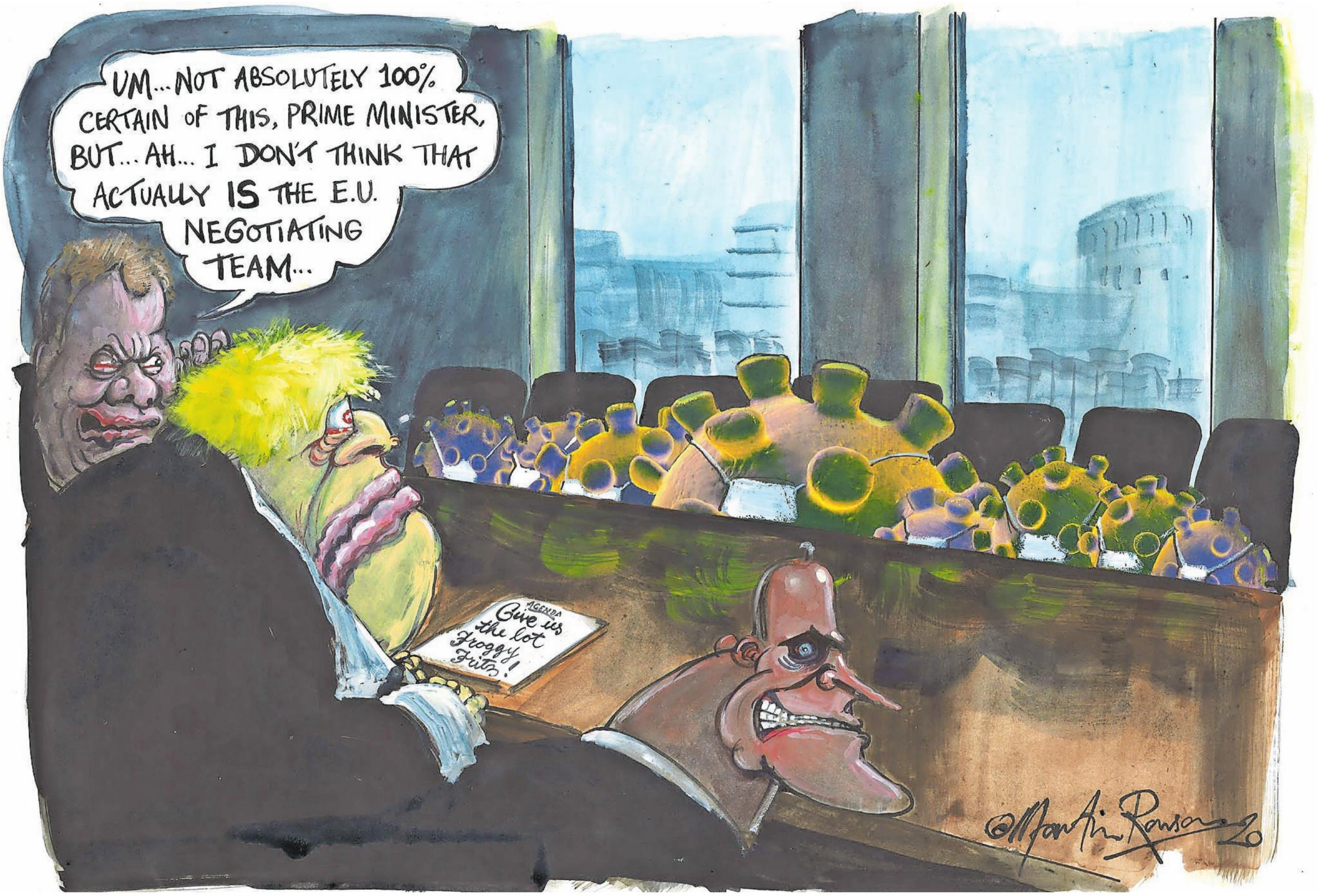
That was three weeks after Dr Li Wenliang warned colleagues on December 30 and was reprimanded for "spreading rumours". He died on February 6. By the time Wuhan owned up the US Centre for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta – its budget cut by Trump – had started checks on travellers from Wuhan. Beijing went into what *Private Eye* likes to call "reverse ferret" mode – the draconian two-month lockdown which is only now easing. Let's hope it did the job. But British government-as-usual was still tied into its first major distraction: Brexit. Now came distraction No.2: Covid-19. This was after a decade when the heavy lifting capacity of central and local authority has been weakened by a decade of economic austerity. That in turn was on top of four decades in which the role and reach of government has – except during New Labour's interlude – been systematically reduced to make way for greater private and voluntary sector involvement. That can sometimes be an improvement, but not when the system is having a heart attack.

* * *

I remember visiting David Cameron's prosperous Witney constituency to test the then-PM's Big Society theories in practice. Council officials and voluntary groups – some recommended to me by Cameron himself – all said they could do better if they had more state support instead of less under George Osborne. This spring, much-needed charities budgets are bleeding copiously and Rishi Sunak's largesse – Boris's version of Dave's Big Society – will struggle to reach them. It's little consolation that a Tory PM – the fourth since Margaret Thatcher's fall in 1990 – was emboldened at the weekend to contradict her oft-misquoted remark that "there is no such thing as society, there are individual men and women and there are families".

But it takes a government to stockpile protective (PPE) equipment, order millions of test kits and fund speculative research to find antibodies that can identify those who have safely had Covid-19 – especially frontline care workers – and vaccines to protect us all. This is where the Johnson government grievously took its eye off the ball for weeks of grandstanding. Ministers have since been guilty of hyping wonder remedies and the distribution flow of protective kit when reality turns out to be weeks, months, even years away. In the here and now we have too few chemicals for too little testing, done too slowly, too centralised when 44 private virology labs could have been recruited.

It is still too soon to say whether their lockdown timing also came too late to spread the surge and prevent hospital staff and ICU's being overwhelmed. It


UM... NOT ABSOLUTELY 100% CERTAIN OF THIS, PRIME MINISTER, BUT... AH... I DON'T THINK THAT ACTUALLY IS THE E.U. NEGOTIATING TEAM...
AGENDA
Give us the lot Froggy Fritz!
©Martin Rowson 20

certainly looks that way. But there is no excuse for lack of preparation. So if Michael Gove's promised "reckoning" with less-than-candid China ever materialises, which I doubt, Govey and Boris are due one too. British travellers stranded far from home long after other nationals have been flown back may wish to contribute, though their plight is less acute than at-risk doctors and nurses.

Recrimination for early failures will be softened if the coronavirus defence is judged an overall success – just as inexperienced Thatcher's complacency over militant miners (1981) and the threat to the Falklands (1981-82) was later redeemed.

The varied responses of governments everywhere face the same calculation. Japan and Sweden (where schools are still open) have been almost as relaxed as populist Brazil. Germany's testing regime – 100,000 a day, at least 10 times Britain's rate – looks like the EU's standout success, at least it does today, though its regional disparities bear watching. So do ours. But everywhere the true death rates are uncertain, we are not comparing like with like.

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As its own crisis deepens, Spain's socialist government now looks in even deeper trouble than Italy while a single Austrian ski resort is blamed for becoming a super-spreader rather than lose its high season. Whatever is going on in sphinx-like Russia is bound to be foreigners' fault – as it is in Trump's "China virus" US where his own aggressive inaction has been disastrous. His own reverse ferret now has 100,000 American deaths as "a good result". Just weeks ago it was a few dozen. State governors, notably New York's Andrew Cuomo, have shown better leadership. There are predictions of 30% US unemployment. The UK too?

Paradoxically in China itself foreigners are also apparently being blamed for re-importing the disease. Even by Trump standards that's outrageous. China's hyper-efficient near neighbours, Taiwan and South Korea, sail serenely on the back of previous experience: via testing and contact tracing. Teeming Lagos, which survived Ebola with skilful action, is now in lockdown along with Moscow.

There is a natural tendency to give governments the benefit of the doubt, we want them to succeed in a crisis. That must be why Johnson's ratings – Trump's too – are up and why leaderless Labour has not made more of own goals like the failure to sign up to an EU ventilator project. "We are no longer members of the EU," was No.10's original line. Then it became an email mix-up, finally an admission of error; another lost opportunity cost also reflected in Whitehall's apparent failure to take up legitimate manufacturing offers within the UK. Prime minister Corbyn would not have been so easily forgiven.

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Political inquests are a long way down the rocky road. More urgent is fire-fighting now. And in this respect the EU27's challenge is as acute as Britain, arguably more so because Britain has already made its political choice to go it alone. As they square up to the likely cost of the pandemic the 27 have an existential political choice of their own to make: do they try to fight it together or to fall further back on national solutions, as has largely been the case so far? If the former then how do they share the burden fairly, especially within the 19-nation Eurozone?

The past few days have not been propitious. As after the banking crash of 2008-9 the European Central Bank has been more decisive than the politicians in announcing its willingness to soak up ballooning debt by buying up to 750 billion euros worth of bonds. But ex-ECB president, Mario ("whatever it takes") Draghi's call on finance ministers to underwrite a form of joint European debt met with a cool response from northern members states – Germany, the Netherlands and Scans – who mistrust their Latin colleagues to the south and west.

As well as costing them serious money when they are struggling to fill the Brexit hole in the EU budget they fear the 'moral hazard' that may arise when they bail out – as they would see it – more profligate comrades.

So the nine Eurozone states, France, Italy and Spain, plus six minnows, who want a mutualised 'coronabond' now face their own dilemma: should they form a coalition of the willing and go ahead on their own?

It would be risky economically – encumbered with debt of uncertain status for decades – but politically risky not to act and be forced to borrow emergency funds from the European Stability Fund and have their budgets supervised by thrifty Germans, as Greece did last time. We can all see how that might work out in countries with powerful populist parties of the nationalist right.

The EU's founding visionary, Jean Monnet, predicted that the new Europe would be forged in crises. Or undone by them.

Dangerous times ahead. Time to review that vodka-and-football Covid-19 strategy in Belarus?

AGENDA

SYMBOL: Pope Francis walks to a church in Rome, a city left deserted by the Covid-19 coronavirus outbreak

Photo: Getty Images

Italy's cruel cross to bear

Bonnie Greer

Anyone who has been to Italy or known Italians will recognise *la bella figura*. The term literally means 'beautiful figure' and expresses a central part of the country's culture, a basic part of who its people are and how they present themselves. *La bella figura* is about presentation, creating a good impression, and showing a respect for beauty.

You must dress appropriately in Italy at all times, so you would never see an Italian student slacker, for example. They try, but they don't really exist. And an older Italian woman dresses in what might be called 'age appropriate' clothing. She is always presentable in public. Everything is 'done'.

You see it everywhere. I saw it on TV recently, with a clip of a Sicilian mayor walking the streets of his town during the current lockdown to make sure it was being observed. The footage shows him yelling at a door asking the woman inside why she needs her hairdresser to drop by. Of course, he knows the answer to this question.

Even he too, in his distress, demonstrates the concept of *bella figura*. He is dressed in a pristine white shirt, black trousers and tie. And black shoes shined to such a buff that you could see your face in them. They catch the sun briefly as he turns toward the camera. This is Italy.

An Italian man will tell a woman – a complete stranger – that she is beautiful if he thinks so. This is not a pick-up. Simply the way he lives. You have to yell if you do not want to be bothered, and they retreat. But these things are now becoming less and less because women are standing up.

Nevertheless everyone in Italy tries to look good. And make the things around them look good. Italians also love their families. It is not a cliché about the way they feel about their mothers especially. When walking around the markets, you can see grown men deferring to their mothers. No macho there.

It has been very difficult being a person of colour in Italy lately. Especially in the north. But even when people look at you aggressively, they still understand that you may know something about wine, meat, cheese. If they know you, they hug you. They kiss you.

And so what has happened in Italy – what is happening in Italy – is an especially tragic thing.

People are dying without family; dying without regard to *la bella figura*. They are lying in anonymous hospital beds, alone and often old, killed by their own lungs trying to fight off an invader.

The culture of *la bella figura* leads the world to believe that Italy is young. Italy is old. Italians live long because they know how to live; how to love. They eat and drink as well as their circumstances allow. They do not understand those who do not. They choose life.

Italy is the fifth oldest country in the world. The average age of an Italian man is 44.4 years: for a woman it's 46.5. The oldest country in the world, Monaco, is just over the border to the west.

What is known as the 'human replacement rate' is very low in Italy. People in their mid-forties are usually not first time parents.

Yet the country projects youth because that is *la bella figura*. The death rate from Covid-19 is high because Italians are old. Age is a risk factor for this virus. For Italy, this is especially tragic.

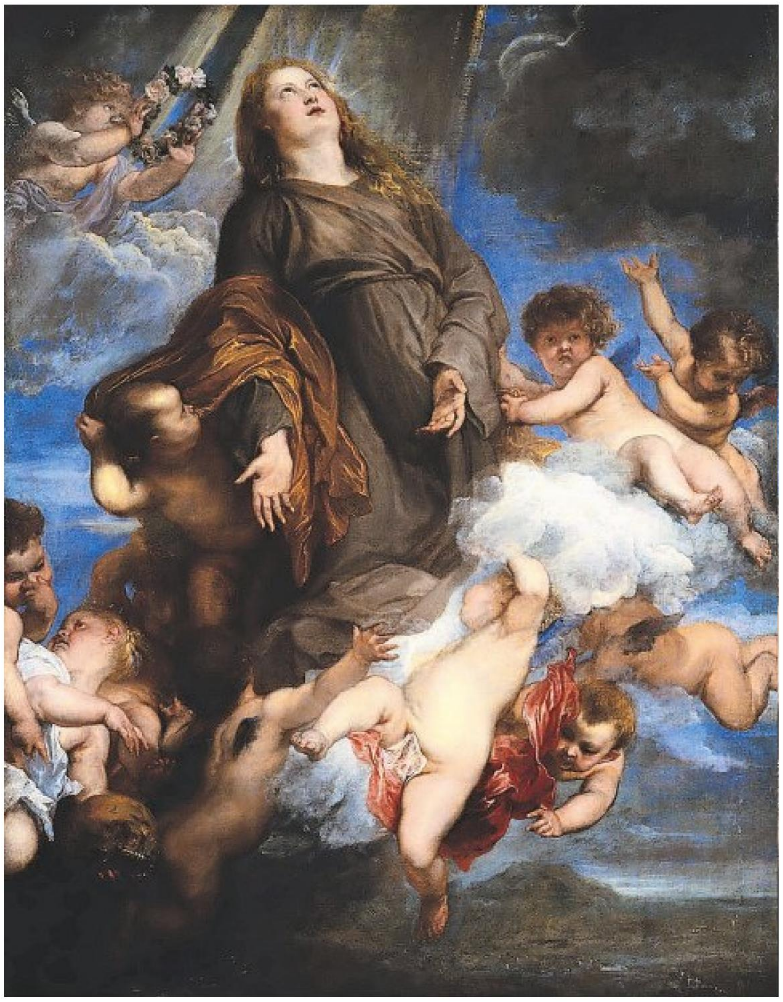
America is not only Irish. It is Italian. New York City, especially, is Italian. When I lived there in the 1980s, "Little Italy" still existed. You could eat at restaurants late into the night where you might see Al Pacino or De Niro arguing with friends over a plate of spaghetti. Italians argue a lot.

Bill de Blasio, the mayor of New York City – the area of the US worst hit by this virus – is Italian. The governor of the state Andrew Cuomo – who has become a global media star because of his daily in-your-face briefings regarding the coronavirus – is Italian. He has live TV shouting matches with his little brother, the CNN anchor Chris Cuomo (who now has Covid-19). They end up attempting to outdo one another in expressions of brotherly affection. This, too, is Italian.

The chief doctor dealing on a national level with the pandemic in the US, Anthony Fauci, is Italian. He tells the American people like it is.

This combination of the need for beauty and also straight-talking and to have to tell a family that their elder, their loved one, must die alone is impossible to contemplate.

The figure of Pope Francis walking down a normally busy street in Rome, on his way to a church where a cross is displayed in honour of a saint who saved the city from a plague in the 17th century, has to be a symbol of what Italy must feel



BELLA FIGURA: Anthony van Dyck's *Saint Rosalie Interceding for the Plague-Stricken of Palermo* (1624)
Photo: Getty Images

THE PAINTING AND THE PLAGUE

The painting was one of several of Saint Rosalia produced in Palermo by van Dyck in the late summer of 1624, when the city was quarantined. It depicts the local patron saint interceding for the city during an outbreak. In the background can be seen the port of Palermo and Monte Pellegrino. Saint Rosalia had lived in a cave on the mountain as a hermit and died there in 1166. In 1624, as a plague beset Palermo, she is said to have appeared to a sick woman, then to a hunter, to whom she indicated where her remains were to be found. She ordered him to bring the bones to Palermo and have them processed through the city. After this was done, the plague is said to have ceased.

now. As is the serenading from balconies, and the applause for care workers.

The plague has been so much a part of Italian history, so woven into the fabric of its being. The pandemic known as the Black Death – another zoonotic infection like the coronavirus, that is, it crosses species – came into Europe through Genoa.

The Italians became fascinated with death and they also came to believe that perhaps there may not be a God up there. Or at least an all benevolent one. The 'dance of death' became a key motif in their art. Along with the need for pleasure.

It might be said that this contradiction created the Renaissance, as exemplified in the writings of Boccaccio and Petrarch. Giotto and Botticelli began to paint human beings.

The beautiful church left behind in the 'white flight' as we African Americans began to leave our ghettos and buy houses in Chicago in the late 1950s and early 1960s was Italian. Italian baroque. It was my first art book; my first paintings; my first museum. Italian to its core; its ornate altar real gold woven through it; the bleeding heart of Christ, part of a statue that loomed near the altar, the utter glory of it all made me quite angry when Vatican Two – the Second Vatican Council, in 1965 –decreed that all had to be toned down. An Italian church is religion itself.

When I lived in New York City, I went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art when I could. Hanging there is a 1624 painting by Anthony van Dyck – *Saint Rosalie Interceding for the Plague-Stricken of Palermo*. Images of the saint, who died in the 12th century, became the rage after her remains were found during the epidemic. And van Dyck makes her not a typical exalted being, but an ecstatic beauty. Even in the midst of a pandemic, he found his *bella figura*.

And then there is signora Italica Grondona, who was born in 1917 and lived through the so-called Spanish Flu pandemic, who has just been released from hospital in Genoa having recovered from Covid-19. She is *bella figura*.

The peddlers of Covid conspiracies

STEVE ANGLESEY on the theories spreading as fast as the virus

As the author of *The Day of the Jackal* and *The Odessa File*, Frederick Forsyth deals in elaborate yarns. Last month, readers of his *Daily Express* column were treated to the latest.

The 81-year-old wrote: "Without any official announcement the word seems to be spreading – faster than the virus. Even my local postman wished to tell me about it.

"Apparently the coronavirus did not start in a live-meat market, disgusting though they are. It seems an official Chinese laboratory in Wuhan was trying to devise an all-purpose vaccine. To give it something to work against, they needed a new toxin.

"They didn't crack the vaccine but managed to come up with Covid-19. Then a dozen lab staff caught it and the unit was sealed.

"But one technician escaped and began to spread the malady all over the city. The meat-market story was invented to divert blame."

The tale has many of the hallmarks of a Forsyth thriller – the secretive government, shadowy organisation, the covert mission, the deadly mistake, the daring breakout, the well-orchestrated cover-up. Like a Forsyth thriller, it is also a work of fiction, and therefore its correct place is within the pages of an airport paperback rather than those of a supposed newspaper of record (admittedly one with knowledgeable and well-placed sources inside Britain's postal service).

The old postie's tale is, in fact, a conflation of old and new myths. The claim that AIDS was created in a CIA bioweapons laboratory dates back to 1986 and a phoney 'research paper' produced at a summit in Zimbabwe; more recently the misuse of a short story first posted on the website *Reddit* has led people to believe that a "senior Chinese military intelligence officer" confessed to creating the virus in order to subdue young protestors in Hong Kong before things went badly awry. "We wanted the population of Hong Kong to submit to us; we did not want to exterminate it," the repentant spymaster laments during a stirring *mea culpa* which features a top-secret plan to sell the bioweapon to the USA, its subsequent theft from the lab by concerned Chinese scientists and a climactic shoot-out in the city of Wuhan which ultimately leads to the deadly strain being released by accident.

CONSPIRACY THEORIST: Thriller writer Frederick Forsyth
Photo: Getty Images

Like Forsyth's novels, these unlikely stories carry an air of plausibility by taking established reality (as per *The Day of the Jackal*, where there really was a right-wing plot to assassinate Charles de Gaulle) and adding a fabricated layer on top. They also play into our willingness to believe in conspiracy theories, which is based both on our advanced intelligence and our simplistic need to make sense of a complex world.

On the former, Goldsmiths psychology professor Chris French told the BBC last year: "We are very good at recognising patterns and regularities. But sometimes we overplay that – we think we see meaning and significance when it isn't really there. We also assume that when something happens, it happens because someone or something made it happen for a reason."

On the latter, Cambridge social psychologist Sander van der Linden told *Psychology Today*: "Many of us are uncomfortable with the notion of randomness, because it lacks meaning. The only thing it communicates to people is uncertainty and a lack of agency and control over what is happening in the world.

"It is easier, and much more comforting, to simply point our finger at someone. Conspiracy theories, therefore, serve an important role – they restore a false sense of certainty and control."

Thus some people will continue to believe that coronavirus originated from last November's 5G switch-on in China (sub-6 GHz radio signals have been used around the world for years, so symptoms would have emerged sooner) or that it was created and patented in England in 2015 (the term coronavirus is a catch-all for a group of viruses; the patent in question covers a potential vaccine for avian coronavirus, which affects only birds).

The conspiracies will continue to spread across social media thanks to the likes of Forsyth and the *Express*, rapper Cardi B (who implied that celebrities including Idris Elba might be being paid to say they had tested positive as part of an awareness campaign) and comedy actor Cedric the Entertainer, who reposted a video claiming Bill Gates "either predicted or planned the coronavirus outbreak".

It barely helps that one of the biggest celebrities of all on social, with 75.5 million Twitter followers, spent the first weeks of the pandemic propagating myths like the idea that "during the month of April, the heat generally kills this kind of virus" or that the outbreak is "very mild" and that the infected could recover by "going to work", or that it can be treated with antimalarial drugs.

It helps even less that this now repentant conspirator-in-chief was the president of the United States, Donald Trump.

He may have changed his tune because, as Syracuse University assistant professor Whitney Phillips told the *New York Times* this week, "What this case will show is that conspiracy theories can kill."

LETTERS: Have your say, email letters@theneweuropean.co.uk

Write off this year to help NHS, students and sport

Andrew Adonis makes the point that students should be allowed to repeat this year with no fees ("We must offer hope for what comes after", *TNE* #188).

My daughter, who is in her first year at university, has already suffered as a consequence of the lecturers' strike and will have lost half a year of her education.

Without an exit strategy in sight I cannot see our society being back to normal by September, so could we risk another cohort of freshers going up to university and the risks of triggering further coronavirus outbreaks? It may well take 12 months to get back to normal, assuming that we have been able to produce an effective vaccine and vaccinate enough of the population to be 'safe'.

So why don't we declare 2020 the 'year that didn't happen', putting normal life on hold until March 2021?

Our sporting competitions – Premier League, Six Nations, FA Cup, Olympics, Euros, Wimbledon etc – can pick up where we left off in 2020.

Likewise we could do the same in education. Rather than try and force our students and schoolchildren to be assessed in arbitrary ways which will impact on them for the rest of their lives, why don't they pick up where they left off in 12 months' time, or sooner if coronavirus allows?

Nick Roberts
Selly Oak

Chinese whispers

I agree with much of what Paul Knott writes about China and Covid-19 ("The shadow hanging over China's recovery, *TNE* #188).

However, the world won't forget that it was probably one of China's cruel and filthy 'wet markets' that has brought humanity to its knees. You don't have to subscribe to Trump's crude "Chinese virus" xenophobia to see this.

China is everybody's problem now. The so-called 'international community' has been in denial about China because it is perceived as a strategic partner.

One could argue that it is because of western arrogance that we know so little about such an important country. Everybody knows president Putin's name, but how many have heard of president Xi? This has to change.

Will Goble
Rayleigh

Don't blame the Chinese for being slow off the mark. They had no great warning and knew little about what was coming. However we did have warning and lots of information from China and we were still slow off the mark, so we are at least as much at fault.

Dudley Dean
Maresfield

Animal readers of THE NEW EUROPEAN

Dr Fiona Bowie writes: "Charlie from Chepstow, is checking out the park in the cartoon for canine company."

■ Does the animal who runs your household read *TNE*? Send photographic evidence and crucial biographical details to letters@theneweuropean.co.uk, putting 'Animal Readers' in the subject field.

Ventilator blues

The utter cock-up over ventilator supplies is a shocking example of political dogma taking precedence over the very lives of our people. We may have left the EU on January 31, but far from being excluded from the EU's ability to buy ventilators preferentially and in bulk, this country is still entitled to participate in joint procurement right up to December 31 of this year.

After the shambles of claiming to have missed the EU's emails about this, our government responded: "We are doing our own work on ventilators and we have had a very strong response from business. We have sourced ventilators from the private sector and international manufacturers."

One might imagine they would be chasing up the nearest, most efficient sources of supply, but instead they turned to James Dyson, who currently does not produce ventilators.

As if the story weren't quite enough already we now have a further claim, that over a week ago the Department of Health was offered 5,000 ventilators by the Nantwich-based company Direct Access. Matthew Hancock's department turned them down.

Martin Sookias
Charlbury

Our government's discovery that it inadvertently missed an email inviting it to join the first wave of EU procurement for ventilators reminds me of General Burgoyne's discovery, in Shaw's *The Devil's Disciple*, that the orders crucial to victory in the American revolution failed to be carried out because a letter didn't arrive.

As a result, says Burgoyne, "England will lose her American colonies, and in a few days you and I will be at Saratoga with 5,000 men to face 16,000 rebels in an impregnable position."

His aide Swindon: "I can't believe it! What will History say?"

Burgoyne: "History, sir, will tell lies, as usual."

Swindon: "My God, my God! we shall be wiped out."

Marcia Saunders
London N10

Apart together

In their fight against Covid-19, EU governments have been criticised here for their disunity, but it does not take a genius to understand why they are looking after their own interests.

It will be obvious to the French president, for example, that ultimately it's not Italian or German voters who will re-elect him in the next French elections, but solely French ones. So, in a period of emergency, it will be natural for him to go further than just prioritise the needs of his citizens: they will monopolise his attention.

But it would be wrong to think that, in that area, EU countries have lost sight of their ideal of inter-state cooperation. For example, in their fight against Covid-19 they made use of the 2014 Joint Procurement Agreement on medical countermeasures.

It was based on that agreement that EU countries decided to bulk-buy ventilators.

Suzanne Martin

The Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated very clearly that each member of the European Union can exercise national sovereignty. Indeed all member states have made their own decisions about what to do in response to the pandemic. The Shengen Agreement has been ignored and member states have closed their borders.

The European Union is a group of member states cooperating for trade, human rights, social standards and much else whose underlying purpose is to keep the peace and prevent wars in Europe. This demonstrates that Brexit is based on a pack of lies about sovereignty.

David Hogg
Bristol

Unmissable

I'm finding the 5pm Covid-19 briefings without Boris Johnson more factual, succinct and more credible. I think experts give more guidance than politicians. This may be our darkest hour but Boris is most certainly not Churchillian

Tony Howarth
London SW3

You could take the view that this government is doing a decent job in the circumstances – or you could think it's too little, too late with lots of promises and reassurances but very little action.

My issue with anything this government announces, be it through the mouth of the PM or a minister, is this: we have suffered at the hands of a Conservative-led government for 10 years; we have been fed lie after lie by its leader and some of his senior ministers; we have seen empty promises unfulfilled and grandiose schemes quietly abandoned; we are still waiting for the National Security Committee to finally publish its report.

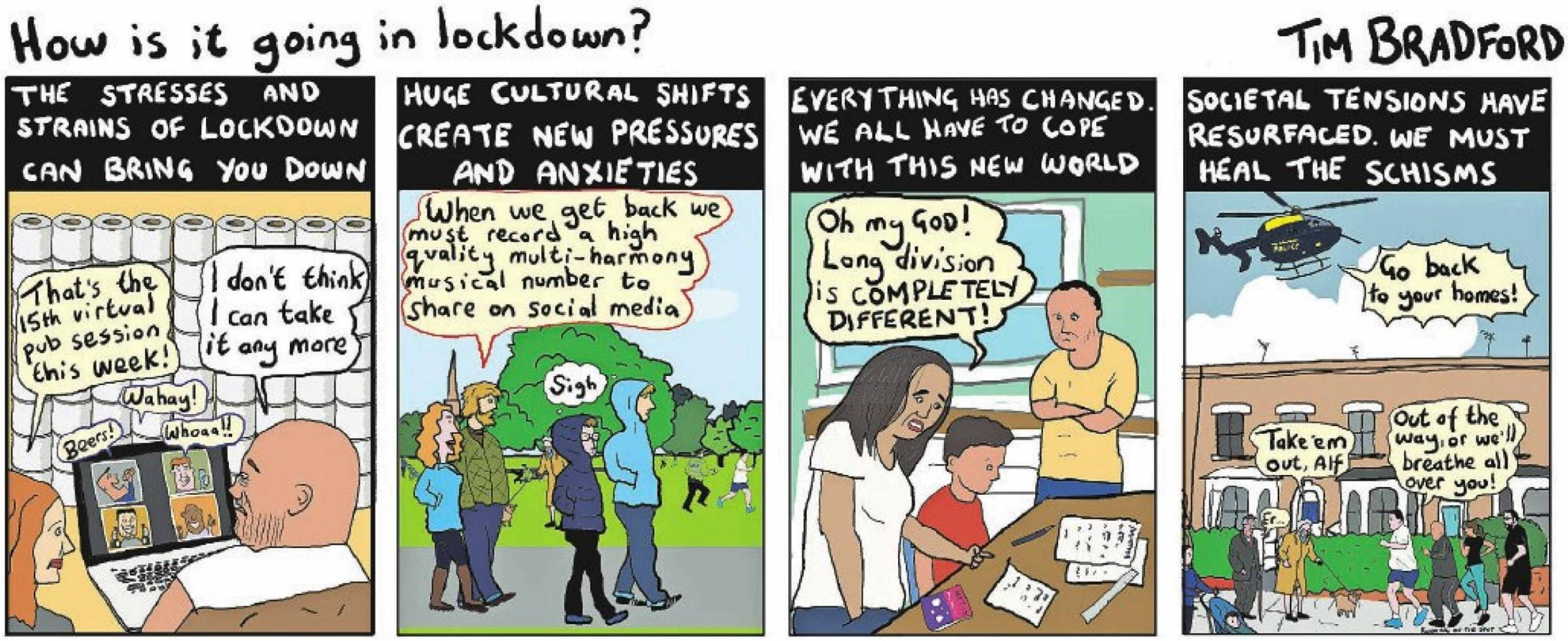
So why should we believe anything that Johnson says, or indeed those who stand alongside him?

Phil Green

Re: Our delay in responding to the Covid-19 outbreak. In January the UK spent most of the time planning Brexit Day celebrations, In February we had the issue of a Brexit 50p coin and a blue passport and in March our Brexit negotiators set off fortified by a breakfast of bacon and eggs and carrying the British flag. What were they doing at all those COBRA meetings? Discussing what they had eaten that morning and making sure the Union Jack was the right way up?

Kathy Erasmus
London

What's going on?


How is it going in lockdown?
TIM BRADFORD
THE STRESSES AND STRAINS OF LOCKDOWN CAN BRING YOU DOWN
That's the 15th virtual pub session this week!
I don't think I can take it any more
Wahay!
Beers!
Whoaa!!
HUGE CULTURAL SHIFTS CREATE NEW PRESSURES AND ANXIETIES
When we get back we must record a high quality multi-harmony musical number to share on social media
Sigh
EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED. WE ALL HAVE TO COPE WITH THIS NEW WORLD
Oh my GOD! Long division is COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!
SOCIETAL TENSIONS HAVE RESURFACED. WE MUST HEAL THE SCHISMS
Go back to your homes!
Take 'em out, Alf
Out of the way, or we'll breathe all over you!
Er...

ANTI-DRUGS GALA
THE JUST SAY NO SHOW
ADELPHI THEATRE, STRAND
SUNDAY 19 OCTOBER, 7.30pm

Mrs T to a T

How entertaining to see Mrs T, aka Janet Brown, turning up on your quiz ("The great self-isolating quiz", *TNE* #188). She made quite a career imitating the prime minister and even starred in a charity do organised by a Sunday newspaper in the 1980s when she appeared on stage with a real-life politician. No idea what became of him.

Richard Holledge
London W14

I'd list all the countries that have handled this crisis better than Boris Johnson and his cabinet of the mediocre but I know you don't like to print long letters...

Amanda Baker
Edinburgh

Fowl play

I wonder how many people now remember the "great chicken shortage," of February 2018? It was so severe that KFC, the bastion of fried chicken, had to close its doors in some parts of our country; some people phoned 999 in desperation for the finger lickin' experience.

KFC is once again closed (rightly so), which has led to panic-buying of all breaded chicken – frozen or not – and even chicken nuggets in my locality!

I just hope that it is the same crazy individuals in both cases otherwise we are soon to be in even bigger trouble!

Robert Boston
Kingshill

Locking horns

You should not have felt the need to apologise about unicorns and national symbolism ("Lion down", Letters, *TNE* #188). The unicorn is the national animal of Scotland and the royal coat of arms, used prior to 1603, was supported by *two* unicorns.

The current Royal coat of arms of the United Kingdom is supported by a unicorn for Scotland and a lion for England. There has never been a chain around the neck of our Lion Rampant, as seen on the Royal Standard.

Knowing your history is a wonderful thing; understanding it, even better.

Pat Harty
Wotton-under-Edge

Bill Taylor of Glasgow seems not to know that the unicorn *is* the heraldic animal of Scotland, so two on the passport cover is rather good, especially for Nats (not me).

The crowned unicorn on the royal coat of arms lost its crown after the battle of Culloden, for disloyalty, but it seems to be back now. It was King Robert who chose the unicorn in the 1300s, as, apparently, he believed in them.

B Barras
Black Isle

Mayo amaze

I loved Mitch Benn's praise for Aldi supermarkets ("Panic's bog standard response", *TNE* #186). Recently my Brighton Aldi store has sort of Waitrosed itself so it no longer has the weird aisle with the hardware, toys and cheapo stuff, but it still has its surreal versions of brands in the food section.

The one I love is the mayonnaise – from a distance it's Hellman's but actually it's Bramwells. Much cheaper but exactly the right off-white squeezy bottle and the dark blue lettering and it tastes the same.

Hermione Huxley

The B-word

The campaign to allow British citizens to apply for associate EU membership must go on. When all this is over the economic consequences will be devastating and the USA will be in no position to offer a new 'Marshall plan' to any other nation .

A concerted effort by a united Europe will get all European nations through the forthcoming depression and provide a model for recovery for the remainder of the world.

Martin Deighton

The B-word has been largely placed on the back-burner for the moment, and rightly so. A little item that may cheer some fellow Remainers/Rejoiners up is the fact that a version of *Ode to Joy* can be loaded as a ringtone from the Zedge app.

Every time my mobile rings now it makes me feel proud to still call myself European and I have to admit that on more than one occasion (well, almost every time!) I have let the mobile ring for the pleasure of hearing it.

David Perrin
Bridgend

Georg Varduli

We're sad to report that Georg Varduli, a frequent contributor to our letters page, passed away on March 22 at the age of 72.

His niece Katie Liddington writes: "Georg was the quintessential European gentleman, he was born in Vienna of Austrian and Greek parents in 1947. Over the course of his life, and with little instruction he became completely fluent in six languages: German, English, French, Spanish, Italian and Greek as well as possessing knowledge of Latin and a smattering of other languages, such as Portuguese.

"He was an international salesman, linguist and world traveller, connecting with people and growing friendships all over the globe, especially throughout Europe.

"He is a father of two and grandfather of three. For many, as for myself, he was a substitute father figure, a kind and good man we looked to as a reminder of how to best live our lives. He was my lighthouse.

"He also leaves behind his widow Alison with whom he lived in London and in February (from the hospital) they celebrated 30 years of marriage – their love story is one that few people ever experience."

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EXPERTISE

The unforgiving spotlight awaiting Starmer

The challenge awaiting Labour's expected new leader could hardly be greater. GLEN O'HARA reports on the man about to be pitched into an unprecedented crisis

LEADERSHIP
Keir Starmer
FOR LEADER

CENTRE STAGE: Labour leadership favourite Sir Keir Starmer faces a huge challenge to revitalise the party
Photo: Getty Images

Sir Keir Starmer must feel as if he's been asked to raise the *Titanic*. The last decade has done enormous, perhaps long-term damage to Labour's image; if all predictions prove correct, this Easter he will replace in Jeremy Corbyn a man still idolised by many party members, who will be on the look-out for any back-sliding or compromise; and now the public policy challenges ahead look not so much forbidding as genuinely frightening.

As Starmer's deep-sea dive circles the darkened wreck of what used to be the Labour Party, he may divine at least three deep holes in its hull.

The first is the fact that voters just don't like it. Not what it's selling – many of its policies are popular – but the party itself. Ipsos-Mori polling immediately after the general election showed that only 27% of adults had a 'favourable' view of Labour, as against 54% who thought of the party unfavourably: a net score of -27 when compared with 'just' -1 for the Tories.

That problem is linked to the second breach in the hull: Labour is beholden to members who think and feel nothing like the public.

Yes, they are willing to compromise with them, and the vast majority of Labour members simply want a fairer, more cooperative society: but a small number have turned social media in particular into a sinkhole of ultra-partisan rage and hatred.

Third and last, there's the problem of policy. Voters thought Labour's 2019 manifesto overloaded and unrealistic: one told a focus group assembled by Lord Ashcroft that "what [Corbyn] promised was just impossible. The billions of pounds they were promising for this, that and the other… It was pie in the sky. People are not daft". How does Starmer keep some of the idealism and clarity of the Corbyn years – elements that attracted so many voters in 2017 – while jettisoning some of the absurdities that made voters laugh at Labour in 2019?

And now, on top of all that, comes the coronavirus crisis, a tragic, debilitating disaster that will leave many people stunned, bereft and grieving.

If it is not crass to say so – and national life has to continue in some way, somehow – this awful adversity makes Starmer's challenges even worse, at least for now.

Public attention will be elsewhere, and Starmer can expect no fanfare of introduction and attention.

The pronouncements and struggles of prime minister Boris Johnson and his cabinet will drown out any other voices for a long time to come.

Parliament is scattered in early recess, and if things get worse it may not reassemble in anything like the form familiar to us.

And after a slow, uncertain start the government is pulling every lever it can find, and then building a few more. There just isn't much for the opposition to get hold of, to get its teeth into: little, in short, to oppose.

The net effect is to put rocket boosters underneath the government's poll ratings.

Two polls over the weekend gave them huge 26-point leads, and the Conservatives hit 54% in both surveys: record numbers for the party while in government.

Johnson is popular: a poll by Number Cruncher Politics showed that 72% of the public were satisfied with his performance, and only 25% dissatisfied.

To some extent, all this plays to Starmer's strengths. He is intelligent, serious, considered; he thinks before he speaks; he has a story to tell about a more united, more professional Labour Party.

For good or ill, he looks like most voters' caricature of a prime minister, and he is not Corbyn.

People in general like what little they have seen of him, one Ipsos-Mori poll in February giving him a net rating of +7 among those who expressed a preference (32 points to 25).

The government's crisis honeymoon may well not last in any case. That depends on what happens next, and there are a number of scenarios that could cause its position to collapse.

If a shortage of kit for heroic National Health Service workers gets fixed in the public mind, if the government loses control of the situation in Britain's hospitals, if it is seen incontrovertibly to have added to the death toll by failing to act sooner, if the public loses patience with a long-term lockdown: any or all of those factors could play a role.

The Conservative government of Lord Salisbury won a huge majority in the so-called 'khaki election' of 1900, at a time when the voting public thought the government's war in South Africa was basically won: once it had dragged on for years afterwards, the Liberals' cause in opposition was rejuvenated.

Most of the public applauded Tony Blair's government when George W. Bush's 'coalition of the willing' captured Baghdad in April 2003: 66% told YouGov they thought that the government had been right to invade Iraq. By 2014, and after years of disastrous sectarian civil war had ripped Iraq to pieces, that number had fallen to 23%.

So politics, as ever, is simply at the mercy of events. No-one knows what is going to happen during the coronavirus outbreak, how the public are going to take it, what the political parties will say.

Starmer gives Labour a chance of looking businesslike and considered, rather than obsessively carping from the sidelines about how this tragedy had proved them right all along – a failure of

tone and empathy on Corbyn's part that will have done Labour further harm. Anyone who wants to sell you an analysis on 'the lessons of coronavirus' right now is a charlatan.

One way in which Labour might find itself in government is via the formation of a multi- or all-party coalition.

In some ways, this has already happened, because the Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh governments are all trying to play a fully joined-up role in this epidemic, and in none of them are the Conservatives in charge.

Some at Westminster are openly ruminating about the need for such an administration. Parliament will struggle to scrutinise the executive, especially if and when more MPs fall sick.

The government has just given itself sweeping new powers, albeit with a six-month 'sunset clause' which will need approval again in the autumn.

A national government is not, in reality, going to happen any time soon. There are too many obstacles in its way. The Tories have only just won a majority, and they are clinging – ever more unrealistically – to the idea that the UK will exit transitional Brexit arrangements at the end of this year.

It is hard to see which seats around the cabinet table could be filled by Labour ministers. Who would Conservatives accept in the place of Priti Patel, for instance? They would certainly not trade such a right-wing home secretary for Starmer, deeply identified with the civil liberties cause as he is: even Yvette Cooper might be thought too liberal.

But there are circumstances where it could happen. London is giving off very worrying signals of becoming a coronavirus hotspot, as Wuhan and Lombardy were before it.

If the capital has to be locked down tighter and tighter, perhaps isolated like northern Lombardy, calls for an emergency cabinet may grow.

If demand for intensive care beds or ventilators far exceeds what can be done to meet it, then the crisis will take on an even darker character which may call for cross-party agreement. Here, too, the future is deeply, radically uncertain.

Just as Johnson's premiership may well be defined by this crisis, so Starmer's reaction to it may well fix him in the public mind for good.

Does he offer more-or-less total backing to the government, does he criticise, does he mount a joined-up critique, and if the worst happens does he even take up some sort of official role? No-one said being leader of Her Majesty's Opposition would be easy, and it certainly won't be now.

In the longer term, as Britain emerges from its coronavirus tragedy – and it will – Starmer will try to fix the impression that Labour is the new nasty party; that it doesn't care what voters think; and that it is prepared to offer an everyday Christmas on the cheap.

It looks like a tall order. But it's not impossible. At this moment among all others, anything could happen.

■ Glen O'Hara is professor of modern and contemporary history at Oxford Brookes University. He is the author of a series of books and articles about modern Britain, including *The Paradoxes of Progress: Governing Post-War Britain, 1951-1973* (2012) and *The Politics of Water in Post-War Britain* (2017). He is currently working on a history of the Blair government of 1997-2007

Is lockdown France's fraternité fraying?

CONSTANCE KAMPFNER reports from Nantes on how the country is coming to terms with its continued confinement

"What's confinement like over there? Is it true that it's crazy strict?" In the kid's playground at the foot of my nine-storey tower block in a giant apartment complex on the outskirts of Nantes, I'm on the phone to a friend back home, catching a rare moment of fresh air.

I tell him that it's not much different from what's going on in the UK, except you have to go to the shops alone. It didn't wash when one woman who was caught food shopping with her husband said that it was because he never got the right kind of yoghurt.

And there are these forms that you have to fill in every time you go outside to prove you've a right to be there. Except not everyone has a printer, so some people copy them out on loo roll. We're a lot less concerned about loo roll here, by the way.

There's a note of urgent inquiry in his voice as he asks me about life across the Channel. I'm used to this. We've been on lockdown for since March 17 and after the UK's confusingly slow response to the crisis, on calls with family members I sometimes feel I'm being used as a kind of looking glass, as they try to work out whether they'll still be feeling sane in a week's time.

Mostly I think they will be. The first few days were actually the strangest, now it feels like we've relaxed into the rhythm of isolation. Although that rhythm also includes the moments where you feel you might explode if you don't go outside soon.

It has been unreasonably hot and sunny over here, and unlike in the UK, the government has closed all the parks. After scrolling through pictures of friends lounging out on their balconies and their back gardens, I feel like deleting Instagram.

"Mostly I feel like I'm just doing all the stuff I'd normally do, but without the guilt," I tell him.

It's true. When I'm not doing interviews over the phone for a local Nantes radio station, I can mainly be found playing *The Sims* with my French flatmates, a dangerous habit I got into after my university finals.

This time, I was all set on building your standard two-up-two-down home and then seeing how many babies our sims could make, neglect and have confiscated. But the guys I live with were horrified by the idea, and our sims now live in a reconstruction of the Chateaux of Pierrefonds.

Our real-life complex is less glamorous, but it does at least have a basketball court. On the day Macron announced imminent lockdown, our preparatory shop included an emergency ball. In moments when I feel I'm going stir crazy, I start dribbling in the flat. "The neighbours!" my conscientious flatmate always reminds me. I stop, realising that they're probably in.

We have little contact with said neighbours, except for the nightly 8pm clapping session, when everyone blasts music and hangs out of their windows. We do have big windows, perfect for people-watching from the vantage point of the ninth floor. Our favourite time of day is when the topless man in the apartment block opposite begins his daily ritual of balcony sweeping cum rigorous push-up session.

Then there's the people across the hall, a young couple also in their twenties, who we've spoken to a couple of times from the safe distance of our respective doormats. They seemed pretty quiet, so it came as a surprise when on Sunday night, they were blasting hardcore French rap out until 4am.

The next morning, a reminder that the feeling of neighbourly goodwill awakened by this crisis will only last so long was tacked onto the ground floor noticeboard. "Did the people on the ninth floor (on the left-hand side as you exit the lift, it fortunately specified) have no idea how disrespectful and puerile their behaviour was?" The anonymous grumbler warned they would be contacting the building's agency. I imagine they won't be hearing back.

This kind of remote communication that we're all growing used to still hasn't lost it's element of ghostliness. To me, it emphasises the feeling that the drama is happening elsewhere, out there… For now, the Pays de la Loire where we are has a much lower infection rate, than the Grand Est, and the Ile de France, the country's worst-hit regions.

On Thursday, France was stunned by heroic images of a TGV train decked out as a hospital, carrying patients from the east towards Nantes and the surrounding cities, using our hospitals to ease the pressure over there.

I get regular updates from a friend in Paris. Yesterday, he told me he was worried about the disparity between how his gentrified neighbourhood is being monitored, while the police seem to have all but given up on the rougher next-door Barbès.

His concern checks out. The French government has stated that intervening in the *banlieues* is "not the priority" right now, as though your postcode could determine your susceptibility to the virus. While images of people gathering late at night in Paris's suburbs have caused outpourings of indignation on social media, lots of people are living in overcrowded flats, and charities are struggling to patch up the holes left by closed food banks.

According to a recent poll, the more right-wing you are, the more likely you are to feel that your compatriots aren't playing by the rules. Some 82% of Rassemblement National (the rebranded Front National) voters questioned expressed that opinion.

So is this neighbourly cooperation all an illusion? Watching the kids on the basketball court playing grandmother's footsteps, making sure to stay well clear of the woman on the other side getting in her daily dose of yoga, I'm not sure.

EVACUATION: Ambulances stand by to load coronavirus patients aboard a medicalised TGV in Strasbourg, France on March 26. Patients from Alsace were being moved to hospitals in the Pays-de-la-Loire region Photo: Getty Images

A time for teamwork

Layla Moran talks to TIM WALKER about how parties and political opponents should find ways to work together to tackle the coronavirus

In this brave new world, politicians are gasping for relevance. Holed up in her constituency home in Oxfordshire, Layla Moran, a former teacher, is managing to keep us attentive. More than that, she's getting the government to sit up and listen.

"It was clear to me from the outset that the public expected politicians to work together and get on with fighting the common enemy," says the 37-year-old Lib Dem MP for Oxford West and Abingdon. "There are of course questions that Boris Johnson will have to face once we have got through all of this, but this isn't the time for political fights. That's the last thing the public wants. This is simply about crisis management."

Moran was among the first to see how important it was that the UK opted into an EU joint procurement scheme to bulk-buy ventilators and other medical equipment to help coronavirus patients.

She fired off a letter to Matt Hancock, the health secretary, to tell him that breathing had become eminently more important to most people than Brexit.

Against a bitter turf war between Hancock and Michael Gove, Moran managed to secure an assurance from the government that it would participate in future schemes.

She says she will "hold its feet to the fire" on this one, and has since drawn attention to a number of other problems that need to be addressed, not least in terms of how the crisis will impact upon the nation's mental health.

"I'm lucky in that I live within five minutes of a field and I can take solitary walks there every now and again," she says. "It's different for people living in the inner-cities and we need to think about what effect being cooped up inside until potentially June or even beyond is going to have on people.

"My local vicar made the point that people who lose loved ones in this epidemic will not be able to grieve for them in the normal way.

"There will not be the comfort of a funeral service, but potentially just mass burials. This is going to be very difficult for people to handle."

Moran has also begun an online petition to ensure that frontline workers fighting against the virus should receive a compensation scheme that's no less generous than the one that's currently in place for members of the armed forces. She recognises it's no less heroic to risk your life against a virus than it is enemy fire.

Good, practical ideas and grassroots initiatives appeal to her at the moment a lot more than grandiose ones.

There had been talk of a government of national unity, but Moran, ever practical, says this is not the time to start switching ministers of state.

She has taken part in the daily cross-party conference calls with the cabinet office minister Penny Mordaunt and says the government is showing a willingness to listen, and, where necessary, to act.

Attitudes are changing rapidly. As she points out, workers previously dismissed by the government as "low-skilled" are now suddenly accepted as indispensable.

She would like, however, to see a "more formalised way" for the various parties to work together and their voices to be heard at the COBRA meetings to discuss how to handle the unfolding crisis.

"Where the Lib Dems are running councils, we are asking the other parties to get involved with the response. I'd like to see that happening nationally, too. This government obviously came into office with a very specific task in mind, but that hasn't turned out to be the very specific task that's required.

"The bandwidth is therefore limited. It is not helpful, either, that we have gone into this with a great many people wary of Johnson – not least the young – because he has made very little attempt to engage with them.

"If I'd a choice of potential prime ministers to handle this crisis, I'd never have picked this one, but the fact is he isn't at the moment doing so badly in the polling.

"I wouldn't say that he has shown himself to be ahead of the curve, but he would appear to be at a point where a very large proportion of the public is.

"Clearly they didn't want to go into lockdown any more than he did, but now he's realised it's our best chance, then probably they can accept the order from him."

Moran knows some of the key scientists currently advising the government – among them Neil Ferguson, whose modelling has informed the UK's strategy on the virus – and she says she has "every confidence" in their expertise.

"Their job is to speak truth unto power and it's also the job of power to listen. Government needs, however, to explain its actions all the way through this. It's patronising to think it's all too complicated for us.

"Alastair Campbell has rightly criticised the messaging we've had so far. It's great the government agreed to the calls for daily press conferences, but there needs to be greater preparation for them.

"If a journalist asks on any given day what number of beds are available in intensive care units up and down the country, I expect those taking these conferences to have that figure at their fingertips."

When this interview was originally planned, the idea had been for Moran to set out her stall as a candidate for the Lib Dem leadership.

To the dismay of a great many of its members, this process was last week put on hold for a year to allow the party to focus on fighting the virus. This means that Ed Davey – alongside party president Mark Pack – will end up presiding over the party as its acting leader for three times longer than Jo Swinson, who comprehensively beat him in the party's last leadership election.

Moran accepts the decision of the federal board, but hopes that, should the battle against the virus take a turn for the better, they may "reconsider" the length of the delay.

She anticipates Keir Starmer winning the Labour leadership contest with a "thumping majority," and, while she believes this will pose challenges for her party, she is adamant that liberal values will be more important than ever.

"Parliament no longer sits and we've given the government unprecedented emergency powers, but once this is over we must be sure to reclaim the freedoms we've temporarily surrendered.

"The world we knew and understood before this virus struck will have changed beyond recognition by then. There's a political battle that we are already seeing beginning between those who reckon it should be a much tougher world – a place where the state is scaled

SENSE OF PERSPECTIVE: Lib Dem leadership hopeful Layla Moran
Photo: Contributed

back and only the fittest survive – and others who see, even at this dark hour, how much better things can be.

"The air is cleaner. We see now how our lives can actually depend upon international cooperation, people don't have to sleep on the streets and we value now our NHS more than ever. What's more, we understand the responsibilities we all have to each other within our communities.

"I think it's given us a moment of enlightenment. The old politics, the right-wing press, even Brexit which we had all been fighting over so passionately until this happened, all seem suddenly unimportant. This has given us a new sense of perspective. I think out of this terrible global ordeal ahead of us, good may yet come, but only if we are prepared to be open to it."

TWITTER CHAMP

Layla Moran may have been denied the chance to fight Ed Davey for the Lib Dem leadership this year, but she's already beaten him in one poll.

Moran's mix of practical information about coronavirus, well-judged campaigns and old world courtesy - in addition to the occasional eloquent video message - has given her the edge on Davey on Twitter. She has 56,000 followers, against his 44,000.

Mandrake

Tim Walker

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Barclays pull up their drawbridge

When **Sadiq Khan**, the mayor of London, appealed to hotel owners in the capital to make rooms available for rough sleepers during the coronavirus epidemic, there was no response from the Ritz. **Sir David** and **Sir Frederick Barclay**, at the time the hotel's owners, are believed to have retreated – in the style of Prince Prospero in **Edgar Alan Poe**'s *The Masque of the Red Death* – to their castle on the island of Brecqhou.

In the days when we were still speaking, Sir David, who was big on apocalyptic prophecies, had foretold the day would come when he would have to take refuge from the outside world. He told me that when he had seen the architect **Quinlan Terry**'s original designs for his castle, he'd ordered that he should double the thickness of the castle's granite walls to 3ft. So far the only invader that the naff mock-Gothic castle has had to repel has been journalist **John Sweeney**, who, in 2012, journeyed to the island in a little boat in a vain attempt to interview the *Daily Telegraph* proprietors for a *Panorama* programme.

Unhappily, the 85-year-old twins, *pictured*, are now enjoined in a legal fight involving alleged bugging, but their castle is of course big enough for them not to have to even catch sight of each other too often. Within its battlements are two swimming pools, a well-equipped and staffed medical centre, and, if the worst comes to the worst, a chapel – blessed by **Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor** – with a crypt beneath which the brothers had originally intended to be interred, side by side.

Incidentally, five years ago the Barclays gave up on their hopes to take over InterContinental Hotels Group, when they sold their 10% stake for £330 million. InterContinental's bosses have commendably answered Khan's call and are working with the mayor's office to provide rooms for homeless people at a discounted rate for the next 12 weeks. Reports this week suggested the Barclay family had sold the Ritz to an unnamed Qatari investor.

No mates

Few if any individuals could have been better prepared for self-isolation than **David Cameron**. Weary of being trophy-hunted by news crews who'd demand to know if he had "any regrets" about Brexit, the former PM has made it a rule for some time now to stay indoors at his various homes in London, the Cotswolds and Cornwall. He has few visitors – sadly old friends like **Michael Gove** and **Sarah Vine** now give him a wide berth – and he spends most of his time reading and engaging in the odd Zoom meeting in connection with his various business interests around the world.

I'm told he's elected to sit out coronavirus in his Cotswolds home, which means his small army of protection officers have had to relocate there, too. Towards the end of his life, **James Callaghan** confided in me that he'd dispensed with the officers who guarded him at his Sussex farm "to save the taxpayer a few bob". I can't ever see the multi-millionaire Cameron ever taking that option.

Out Foxed

The fact **Liam Fox** occasionally lunches with **Rupert Murdoch** seems not to have impinged upon the consciousness of the *Sunday Times* letters editor. "The whole tenor of the piece you published by Fox last week is that he knew a pandemic was coming," one correspondent wrote over the weekend. "Then why did he, as a senior member of the cabinet, not shout from the rooftops until there was a master plan in place, because clearly there never was?"

Grounded

Mandrake has already documented how much **Boris Johnson**, **Liam Fox** and **David Davis**, among others, have billed the taxpayer for their innumerable overseas jaunts, but, sadly for them, that's all been brought to an abrupt halt by coronavirus.

Still, transparency data released last week shows that **Priti Patel**, the home secretary, managed to get in one last trip before lockdown was imposed. Her trip to Washington in October to sign a "landmark data-sharing agreement with her US counterpart" was made all the more enjoyable by British Airways giving Patel, *pictured*, a flight upgrade, presumably to first. Total cost was a relatively modest £8,384.

AGENDA

The great THE NEW EUROPEAN

Let the self-isolation speed past with our fiendishly tough trivia test, set by STEVE ANGLESEY

1) What was Tony Blair's band called?
a) Ugly Remarks
b) Ugly Sisters
c) Ugly Rumours

2) Who described David Davis as "thick as mince" and "lazy as a toad"?
a) Marina Hyde
b) John McDonnell
c) Dominic Cummings

3) Which word did US vice president Dan Quayle misspell on a school visit in 1992?
a) Tomato
b) Potato
c) Burrito

4) As *Guardian* comment editor, Seumas Milne published an opinion piece by whom?
a) Mullah Omar
b) Saddam Hussein
c) Osama Bin Laden

5) On seeing Geoffrey Howe in a dinner jacket, who quipped: "Bring us three Bucks Fizzes and keep the change."
a) Kenneth Clarke
b) Alan Clark
c) Michael Heseltine

6) "She's got a hard shell and she's not for turning"... who owns a tortoise called Maggie?
a) Lindsay Hoyle
b) John Bercow
c) Gyles Brandreth

7) What meal did Theresa May serve at a 2017 election planning summit?
a) Fish lasagne with mashed potatoes
b) Chicken lasagne with boiled potatoes
c) Quorn lasagne with chips

8) When he appeared on a TV quiz in 1991, whose hobbies were described as "real ale and real women"?
a) Michael Gove
b) Boris Johnson
c) David Davis

9) What song did his former flatmate reveal Sir Keir Starmer was once obsessed by, listening to it dozens of times a week?
a) *The Israelites* by Desmond Dekker
b) *Jamming* by Bob Marley
c) *Dreadlock* Holiday by 10cc

10) Which MP shares his surname with a Bond villain?
a) Richard Drax (South Dorset)
b) Duncan Zorin (Camborne and Redruth)
c) Andrew Goldfinger (St Ives)

11) Tim Farron was caught on camera saying what strange phrase during the 2017 election campaign?
a) "Smell my cheese"
b) "Smell the glove"
c) "Smell my spaniel"

12) In 2015, which failed presidential candidate had a two-round boxing match with Evander Holyfield?
a) John Kerry
b) Mitt Romney
c) Al Gore

1

13) What is Vladimir Putin's middle name?
a) Vladimirovich
b) Mikhailovich
c) Sergeyevich

14) The Natural Law Party's 1992 manifesto called for what to be part of British healthcare?
a) Yogic flying
b) Tantric humming
c) Mindful bouncing

15) Former Tory MP Louise Mensch turned down a marriage proposal from who?
a) Jacob Rees-Mogg
b) Boris Johnson
c) Mark Francois

16) Who did the original voice of John Major on *Spitting Image*?
a) Alistair McGowan
b) Rob Brydon
c) Steve Coogan

17) What is Zac Goldsmith's real first name?
a) Fred
b) Frank
c) Forbes

18) Which politician chose four selections by Wagner among their eight *Desert Island Discs*?
a) Margaret Thatcher
b) Nigel Farage
c) Enoch Powell

19) On which Brexiteer's stag do did six of the 10 invitees fail to turn up, including the organiser?
a) Daniel Hannan
b) Dominic Cummings
c) Toby Young

20) A 2005 TV show hosted by Johnny Vegas featured...
a) Neil Hamilton dancing while fish were poured on him
b) Christine Hamilton riding a bike while gunge was poured on her
c) Both Hamiltons pretending to wrestle in mud

21) Jeremy Corbyn's boyhood nickname was...
a) Jeremy Bear
b) Jeremy Fisher
c) Jelly

22) Who wrote the 2003 spy thriller *The Devil's Tune*?
a) Jeffrey Archer
b) Iain Duncan Smith
c) Douglas Hurd

23) Which US politician appeared on their version of *The Masked Singer*, dressed as a giant purple and pink bear and singing *Baby's Got Back* (sample lyric: "I like big butts and I can not lie")
a) Newt Gingrich
b) Sarah Palin
c) Tim Kaine

24) How many pints of beer per day did William Hague claim to drink in his youth?
a) 10
b) 12
c) 14

25) Former Trump adviser Steve Bannon receives a syndication fee each time which classic comedy series is shown?
a) *Friends*
b) *M*A*S*H*
c) *Seinfeld*

26) "Toe Job To No Job" was a tabloid headline about which MP?
a) David Mellor
b) Cecil Parkinson
c) Edwina Currie

27) Ken Clarke's autobiography was named after which Miles Davis album?
a) *Kind of Blue*
b) *Blue Moods*
c) *Bitches' Brew*

28) According to Jeremy Corbyn's ex-wife, why did he refuse to enter the palace of Schönbrunn in Vienna while on holiday there?
a) "Too expensive"
b) "Too boring"
c) "Too royal"

29) David Cameron, who supports Aston Villa, mistakenly claimed to support which other team famous for playing in claret and blue?
a) Burnley
b) West Ham
c) Scunthorpe United

30) Which dance did Keith Vaz do with students as part of Leicester's 2013 bid to become European City of Culture?
a) *Gangnam Style*
b) *Macarena*
c) *The Floss*

31) George Galloway, pretending to be a cat, lapped up imaginary milk from whose hands on Celebrity Big Brother 2006?
a) Chantelle Houghton
b) Traci Bingham
c) Rula Lenska

32) Who paid tribute to the late Bob Holness by tweeting, "A generation will remember him fondly from Blackbusters"?
a) Nick Clegg
b) Ed Miliband
c) David Cameron

**33) Which of these policies has *not* been

2

OBSESSION:
1 Bob Marley on stage in London, 1980. See Question 9

2 Singer and actress Natalie Imbruglia, 1995. See Question 43

Photos: Redferns/Getty Images

Lockdown quiz

PART TWO

advocated by the Monster Raving Loony Party?
a) Speaker to sit in a bath of beans
b) Put parliament on wheels
c) Minting of the 99p coin

34) Why did Harry Whittington apologise to Dick Cheney on February 17, 2006?
a) For calling him a warmonger
b) For accidentally publishing his obituary
c) For being shot by him on a quail hunt

35) Which of these aliases has been used by Stephen Yaxley-Lennon, aka Tommy Robinson?
a) Hugh Janus
b) Wayne King
c) Mike Hunt

36) Which party did Nigel Farage vote for at the 1989 European elections?
a) Conservatives
b) Labour
c) Greens

37) What was Lyndon Johnson's nickname for his penis?
a) Jimbo
b) Jumbo
c) Dumbo

38) Which Brexiteer was christened "thick as mash" and "spud-u-hate" by Conservative colleagues?
a) Mark Francois
b) Peter Bone
c) Andrew Bridgen

39) Which of these London mayors has Kate Bush written a song about?
a) Boris Johnson
b) Ken Livingstone
c) Dick Whittington

40) Who fell out with Margaret Thatcher after telling an Egyptian newspaper "she probably thinks Sinai is the plural of sinus"?
a) Michael Heseltine
b) Alan Clark
c) Jonathan Aitken

41) What nickname did Brussels bureaucrats give to Dominic Raab during his spell as Brexit secretary?
a) The turnip
b) The cabbage
c) The potato

42) Of which US president did Hunter S Thompson write "he was so crooked that he needed servants to help him screw his pants on every morning"?
a) Richard Nixon
b) Lyndon Johnson
c) Warren Harding

43) Who was thanked in the liner notes of Natalie Imbruglia's debut album *Left of the Middle*?
a) Boris Johnson
b) David Davis
c) Liam Fox

44) What was Jennifer Arcuri's nickname for Boris Johnson?
a) Boris Pecker
b) Alexander the Great
c) Boris the Spider

45) Which of these is *not* a nickname for Joe Biden coined by Donald Trump?
a) Sleepy Joe
b) Crazy Joe
c) Jumpy Joe

46) On Len McCluskey's office wall is a large portrait of...
a) Lenin
b) John Lennon
c) Jack Lemmon

47) Who wrote *The Dancing Detective*, a thriller about murder on a TV dancing show?
a) Edwina Currie
b) Ann Widdecombe
c) Vince Cable

48) In which Tracey Ullman video did Neil Kinnock appear?
a) *They Don't Know*
b) *My Guy*
c) *Move Over Darling*

49) Which comedian co-hosted *A Stab in the Dark* with Michael Gove?
a) Rob Newman
b) Frank Skinner
c) David Baddiel

50) Which animal is on Lord Tebbit's coat of arms in a reference to an insult by Michael Foot?
a) Polecat
b) Weasel
c) Stoat

TEAM TROUBLE: **3** Aston Villa's Jack Grealish. See Question 29

4 The cast of *Seinfeld*. See Question 25

Photos: Getty Images

RESULTS

40-50
You're the Brain of Britain, Top of The Form and a total Egghead

30-39
At the Tipping Point to being a Mastermind. Ask The Family next time

20-29
You were Going For Gold but got bronze. After a couple of Golden Balls-ups

10-19
Are You Smarter Than A 10-Year-Old? On this showing, it's marginal

0-9
You are The Weakest Link. But cheer up; you could be Pointless

ANSWERS 1) c 2) c 3) b 4) c 5) b 6) a 7) b 8) a 9) a 10) a 11) c 12) b 13) a 14) a 15) a 16) c 17) b 18) c 19) c 20) a 21) c 22) b 23) b 24) c 25) c 26) a 27) a 28) c 29) b 30) a 31) c 32) b 33) a 34) c 35) b 36) c 37) b 38) c 39) b 40) c 41) a 42) a 43) c 44) b 45) c 46) a 47) b 48) b 49) c 50) a

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EXPERTISE

GREAT ESCAPE: Apollo 13 astronauts Fred Haise, Jack Swigert and Jim Lovell await a helicopter rescue after their miraculous splashdown in the Pacific. With them is a Navy frogman, second from left

Photo: Getty Images

AFTER APOLLO

THE FALLOUT FROM SPACE'S GREAT ESCAPE

Fifty years ago, the ill-fated Apollo 13 mission managed to turn a technical failure into a stunning success. But, in the longer term did NASA come out stronger or weaker? **MICK O'HARE** reports

Although Jack Swigert never actually said "Houston, we have a problem" the words have since passed into the canon of English cliché, shorthand for an unexpected complication or mishap. Nonetheless, when his voice crackled into Mission Control, he sounded – as his training had taught him to be – appreciably calm. Yet his real words – "OK, Houston, we've had a problem here" – were an enormous understatement because, boy, did the three astronauts of Apollo 13 have a problem. Swigert, along with Fred Haise and mission commander Jim Lovell were likely to be dead within hours as their oxygen seeped away into space.

Three days earlier, Apollo 13 had lifted off from the Kennedy Space Centre on April 11, 1970 on what was already becoming a "routine" mission: flying to the moon and back.

The public barely registered the fact that somebody else would soon be walking on the lunar surface. After all, four men already had. Fifty-six hours later everybody on the planet who had a TV or a radio was tuning in.

During a routine stirring of one of the Command Module's oxygen tanks the astronauts heard a loud bang, felt the spacecraft shudder and an internal wall flexed. Damaged insulation had left exposed wires in the tank. When the switch to stir it had been flipped, the wires had short-circuited, sparking an explosion.

Lovell looked out of the window and told Mission Control that a gas or liquid was venting into space. It was oxygen. Their life support was bleeding away into the void. Two of their three fuel cells were dead too and oxygen was also needed to power the spacecraft.

Within minutes the moon landing was cancelled, Apollo 13 was now all about getting the astronauts back to earth alive. "Failure is not an option" was another phrase never uttered by those involved at the time (it was coined by the makers of

▶ Turn to page 24

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2

HEROES HOME:
1 Apollo 13 crew members, from left, Fred Haise, Jim Lovell and Jack Swigert following their dramatic escape

2 The Apollo 13 astronauts tread water in the Pacific as they await recovery after their return to Earth

Photos: Getty Images

▶ From page 23

the eponymous 1995 film, starring Tom Hanks as Lovell), but it perfectly summed up the attitude of the men and women at Mission Control back in Houston, Texas, headed by flight director Gene Kranz.

His co-flight directors and close colleagues Glynn Lunney, Gerry Griffin and Milt Windler were at work on rescue scenarios within an hour.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The story itself is now well known. A tale of rescue, of derring-do and technological brilliance that probably has no equal in the annals of humankind.

The Command Module was now pretty much useless; powerless and inert. Its engine could not be fired but the top section was still required for re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere so the Lunar Module (the lander that would have carried Lovell and Haise to the moon's surface) was called into action as a lifeboat.

It would power the spacecraft to the moon (you can't just turn round in space when you are heading one way at thousands of kilometres per hour), use the gravity of the moon to slingshot around the back and head home again.

But any number of other obstacles stood in the astronauts' way. They all had to move into the Lunar Module where there was power, but only space for two. And although the Lunar Module had enough oxygen to get the men home, the carbon dioxide they were exhaling was contaminating their breathable atmosphere.

It would take four days to return to earth but only two days' oxygen was available. There was a point shortly after the explosion when Mission Control concluded the astronauts were doomed.

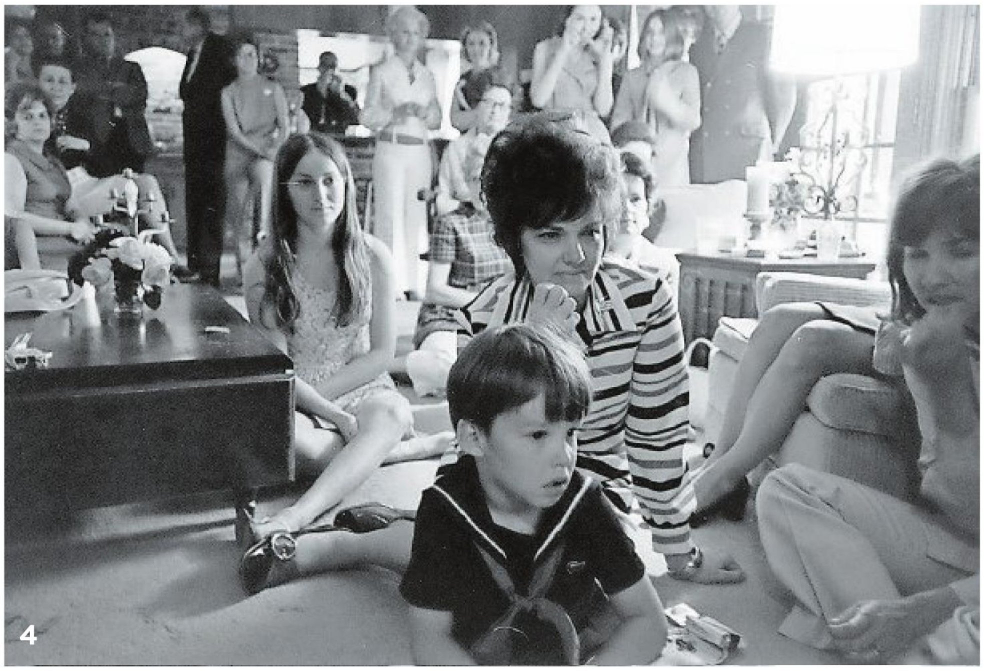
Yet there was more hardship, including freezing temperatures as the astronauts strived to save battery power; having to use the Lunar Module's crude descent engine to make vital course corrections (Like "flying with an elephant on your back," said Lovell afterwards); Haise picking up a urinary infection because the limited water had to be rationed (and used to cool the spacecraft's systems) and condensation forming on the ice-cold instrument panels, meaning every flipped switch had the potential to short-circuit the spacecraft's electrics.

Innovative minds back on earth adapted the damaged Command Module's lithium hydroxide canisters, intended to absorb the exhaled carbon dioxide, so they would work in the Lunar Module, using copious amounts of duct tape and plastic sheeting to ensure a breathable air supply, while the astronauts rose to every problem and task thrown at them by the circumstances and their colleagues on earth.

One final fear was that the heat shield on the Command Module had been damaged by the initial explosion and that the capsule and its occupants would burn up during re-entry. But on April 17, Apollo 13 splashed down in the Pacific four miles from the recovery ship USS Iwo Jima. Lovell, Swigert and Haise were alive.

The planet had watched transfixed. Suddenly space was cool again. After Sputnik, after Yuri Gagarin and after the Apollo 11 moon landing, it had all become a bit mundane, a bit 'been there, done that'. TV viewing figures for the Apollo 12 moon landing the previous November had fallen through the floor. Now the world was watching again.

But while Apollo 13's story is widely known, and immortalised in literature and film, what were its ramifications beyond the number-one priority of saving



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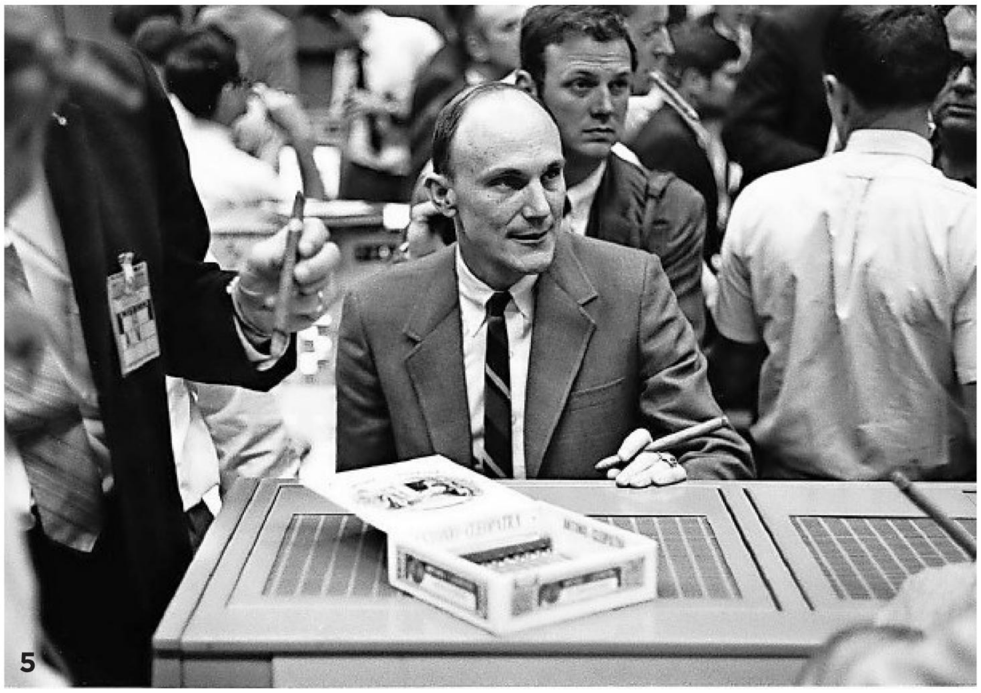

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three lives? Was the impending but averted disaster politically damaging? Did it make politicians in Washington DC, terrified of the political consequences of Americans dying in space, more likely to pull the plug on the whole Apollo project? Or did the opposite happen? Did NASA, keen for publicity and even more keen for the Apollo missions to continue, manage to turn what could have been disaster for the space programme into a triumph – an almost Dunkirk-like reimagining of the whole narrative.

* * *

Shortly after the explosion Lovell was heard to say: "I'm afraid this is going to be the last lunar mission for a long time." The media quickly latched onto this – despite NASA administrator Thomas Paine immediately announcing that nothing had been cancelled – convinced that no American leader could risk humans in space again.

Yet, for whatever flaws he had elsewhere, president Richard Nixon had been generally supportive of the space programme. "The mission recaptured global attention on Apollo again but it led Nixon to consider the potential impact of a fatal space accident on his administration," says Teasel Muir-Harmony, curator of the Apollo spacecraft collection at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum in Washington DC and an expert in the politics of spaceflight.

"He felt very connected to the crew, asked for updates twice an hour, and was known to treat astronauts as the sons he never had. But, that said, he was always concerned with re-election," she adds. "And he was always ambiguous about his position on Apollo and it's often hard to determine exactly his relationship to the programme."

This was obvious when Nixon made immediate political mileage out of the successful Apollo 13 return by flying to both Houston and then Hawaii, where the astronauts had been taken, to award them and the operations team the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

But Nixon also knew the American public had long had one eye on the fact that its tax dollars were funding adventures in space while back on earth more worldly issues such as the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement were more of a priority.

And their senators and congressmen and women were beginning to take note too. Apollo 13 just gave more emphasis to their attacks on NASA's huge budget.

Yet Nixon himself was a pragmatist, before Apollo 13 he had already approved the funds for more moon landings and although after it he could see the risks, he was also aware of the political value of the programme and the reflected glory a president could bask in over its success. It was a balancing act, he didn't want to be the one who canned Apollo, but also he didn't want to risk the political destruction that could follow the loss of Americans in space.

With the 1972 election foremost in his mind Nixon repeatedly proposed that Apollo 16 and Apollo 17 be shifted until after it was over. "He thought another accident in space could ruin his bid, and these two missions would fall during the campaigning period," says Muir-Harmony.

And while Apollo 18 and 19 were both later cancelled for budgetary reasons NASA realised that Apollo 13 had thrown serious doubt on the viability of the moon-landing project.

The inquiry into the Apollo 13

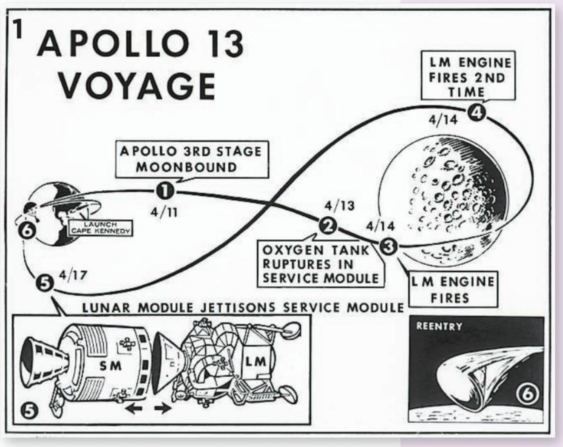
Turn to page 26

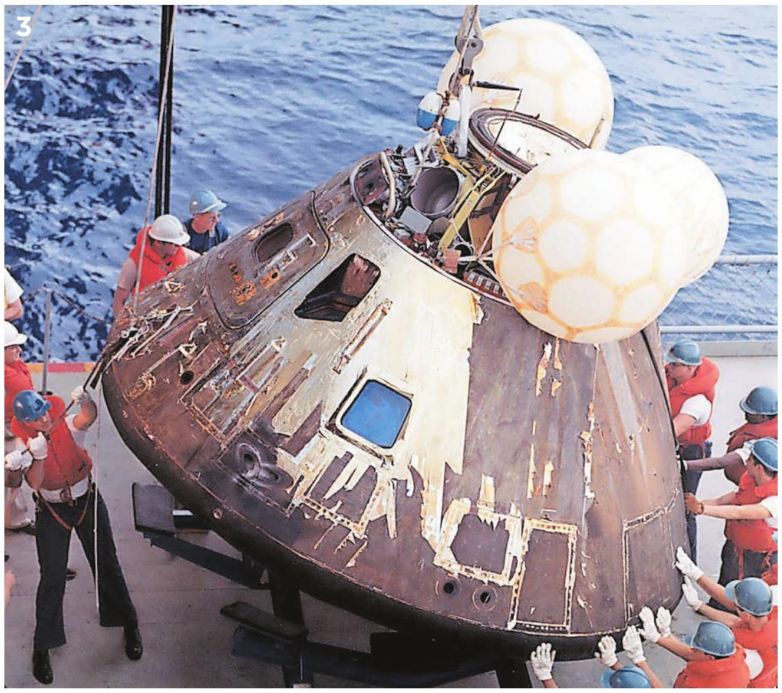
MISSION:
3 The Apollo 13 crew, from left, Jack Swigert, Jim Lovell and Fred Haise

4 Wife of Apollo 13 commander Jim Lovell, Marilyn Lovell, anxiously follows the rescue on TV

5 Ken Mattingly, originally set to fly on Apollo 13, celebrates the success of the rescue mission

Photos: Getty Images





RESCUE:
1 Graphic that explained the strategy deployed to enabled Apollo 13 to return to earth

2 NASA mission control centre staff applaud the successful splashdown on April 17, 1970

3 Crew from recovery ship USS Iwo Jima winch the Apollo 13 command module on deck

Photos: Getty Images

From page 25

explosion obviously meant that the next mission, Apollo 14 – due to depart in October 1970 – would be delayed (it eventually launched the following January). NASA was feeling the heat.

The Soviet Union, the United States' big rival in space, took advantage of the hiatus by sending two uncrewed probes to the moon to collect soil samples, making great play of the fact that their missions had been achieved with no risk to human life (and cost far less). Media, both in the US and abroad, were increasingly disparaging about crewed spaceflight.

British weekly magazine *New Scientist*, a longstanding opponent, was especially dismissive, carrying a mere three paragraphs on the Apollo 13 mission over the course of three weeks and adopting a condescending 'we told you so' attitude.

It was then that NASA, realising that even if it and Apollo weren't under direct threat it was now in the spotlight and looking over its shoulder as Congress eyed its budget. Another slip up and its existence would be hanging in the balance. It somehow had to turn the potential disaster of Apollo 13 into PR gold.

Capitalising on the enormous public attention the rescue had generated – 70 million Americans watched the astronauts' return, millions more around the world, and nations across the planet offered assistance in whatever form, including the Soviet Union – NASA became aware of its great reach into the public consciousness.

As Jack Gould of the *New York Times* stated, Apollo 13 "which came so close to tragic disaster, in all probability united the world in mutual concern more fully than another successful landing on the moon would have".

* * *

Thomas Paine constantly emphasised to the Nixon administration, often via his perceived ally the vice-president Spiro Agnew, that the Soviet Union would step into the metaphorical and literal void if Apollo was canned. And while this frustrated Nixon, who was dead set on a process of détente with the USSR both on earth and in space, it kept the issue at the forefront of political minds.

NASA took control of the narrative. The ingenuity that it had demonstrated in order to save Apollo 13 was repeatedly pushed out to the world – from a failure of technology had come technological brilliance. It mattered not that the official inquiry noted procedural discrepancies (although no individual was blamed for the faulty wiring in the tank) what was lauded was the selfless endeavour and collective genius that had been put into getting the astronauts home safely – American, home-grown genius.

Gerald Griffin, who would have been the flight director for the actual landing had the explosion not occurred, emphasised the teamwork that turned a desperate rescue mission into a commendable achievement through American sagacity. "You seldom heard the personal pronoun 'I' he said, "most of the time it was 'we', because we trusted each other."

Likewise capsule communicator, or CapCom, Jack Lousma, the man who was the recipient of Swigert's first message, stressed the professionalism of the team. "We just responded as we had to," he said.

"It was a bunch of people who were trying to solve these problems as they came up." He would later say: "When Ron Howard made the [*Apollo 13*] movie and everybody found out what really happened, people saw that it was one of NASA's finest hours."

"It's something that should never have happened. Even though it gave us a great story, three lives were at stake," says Doug Millard, senior space curator at London's Science Museum. "And it's been variously described as a successful failure or a triumphant disaster. But on balance I'd argue that because NASA gave great emphasis to the way they improvised and their ingenuity, in the end it actually benefited the space programme."

Nonetheless Nixon was intent on shifting spaceflight from being America's top priority, to just one of many. And he was still preoccupied with re-election, increasingly concerned that Apollo 15 in July 1971 should be the last launch before his campaign got under way.

In May, according to John Logsdon's book *After Apollo? Richard Nixon and the American Space Program*, he was insisting to his staff: "We have got to get off those damn moon-shots... none after July. I don't want to risk any more."

And after Apollo 15's safe return there was no let-up, he wanted 16 and 17 to be postponed. "I don't feel the shots are a big deal. There is the risk you could have another Apollo 13. There will not be any launches between now and the election."

* * *

But Nixon did not get his wish. Apollo 16 went on schedule in April 1972. NASA had spun the Apollo 13 narrative, outmanoeuvring the president who

POLITICAL MILEAGE:
4 US president Richard Nixon visits NASA headquarters to present the Presidential Medal of Freedom to the Apollo 13 mission operations team on April 17, 1970. The next day, Nixon flew to Hawaii to present the Presidential Medal of Freedom to the astronauts

Photos: Getty Images

HEFTY INVOICE

On the day Apollo 13 splashed down in the Pacific, officials at North American Rockwell, builders of the Apollo 13 Command Module, were surprised to receive a bill from Grumman Aerospace Corporation, the builders of the Lunar Module. It was for "towing" the Command Module to the moon and back and came to $417,421.24. Broken down there was a charge per mile ($4 for the first mile, $1 thereafter), £8 dollars per night guest accommodation costs for an extra astronaut the Lunar Module was not designed to carry, and $536.05 for battery charging. They did offer a discount for timely payment. Continuing the joke, North American refused to pay on the grounds that they had taken three previous Lunar Modules to the moon and back (Apollos 10, 11 and 12) and had not asked for payment.

A LONG WAY FROM HOME

One record Apollo 13 holds to this day is that for the furthest distance humans have travelled from the Earth. Because of the altered trajectory of the flight and the fact that in any case the Moon was at that point further away from the earth than for other missions, at 00:21 GMT on April 14 the three astronauts were 400,171 kilometres from the Earth.

would soon be enmeshed in a scandal that would demand far more of his time than the space programme.

On the one hand you had a public who wanted its tax dollars spent on earthbound issues, a pragmatic orthodoxy that appealed to the political base, yet on the other hand perhaps the greatest single instrument of American soft power – a foreign policy by proxy – was its space programme and specifically Apollo.

Walking on the moon was a feat that people everywhere could admire. Apollo 13 fitted perfectly into that narrative – American resourcefulness saving three of its chosen sons.

And NASA was being canny too, offering the government a concession. "After Apollo 13 they decided to cancel two Apollo missions, numbers 15 and 19," says Muir-Harmony. "Apollo 20 had already been assigned to Skylab (America's first space station) so that meant three missions would no longer fly."

To avoid numerical confusion Apollo 16 became Apollo 15 and so on. For a while Nixon and the politicians in Washington were mollified, but as election year approached he became twitchy about Apollo 16 and 17 again.

"In some ways it can be considered good luck the accident happened when it did," says Muir-Harmony. Interest in the programme was waning and a presidential election was looming. "In the end a kind of compromise was reached." Nixon was aware that Apollo 13 had sparked renewed interest so he didn't want to be responsible for being the man who cut the purse strings, instead just reining it in until he could be re-elected. "NASA convinced the public and Nixon of Apollo's benefits," says Muir-Harmony, "and Nixon realised he could downgrade the programme in America's list of domestic priorities."

In the end Nixon cut the budget but kept the programme, including Apollos 16 and 17 (although the latter would launch after election day). This was more Nixon pragmatics at play. "He also realised the importance of the aerospace industry to California's economy," points out Muir-Harmony, "and he hoped to win California in the election." Nixon, of course, did get re-elected although after being consumed by the Watergate scandal the following year he might have wished he hadn't.

There was a lot of luck surrounding the flight of Apollo 13, its designated number notwithstanding. It was fortunate the explosion happened on the outward flight – had it happened while the lunar module was on the moon there would have been no Command Module to return to in orbit. Had it happened on the return journey there would have been no Lunar Module to carry the astronauts back home. And there was double-edged luck too for Jack Swigert. Three days before launch he hadn't been on the flight. The original Command Module pilot Ken Mattingly had been exposed to German measles and was not immune. Had it not been for NASA's ingenuity Swigert would have been on the receiving end of the worst luck of all. And Mattingly never did come down with rubella.

In 2015 Jim Lovell lauded the political reconfiguring that NASA had performed – the proverbial disaster turned into triumph. "The flight was a failure in its initial mission," he said. "However, it was a tremendous success in the ability of people to get together, like the mission control team working with what they had and working with the flight crew to turn what was almost a certain catastrophe into a successful recovery." Stealing a quote from Winston Churchill, Apollo 13 has since become known as "NASA's finest hour".

Fifty years ago, to use another outworn cliché, the world held its breath. "The astronauts' survival was in doubt throughout the mission," says Muir-Harmony. "Apollo 8 commander Frank Borman, a confidante of Nixon's, told him to be ready for the worst outcome." That the astronauts returned is not only one of the great adventure stories in human history, it was also the triumph of tenacity over adversity and, as we have learnt, of bravado over politics.

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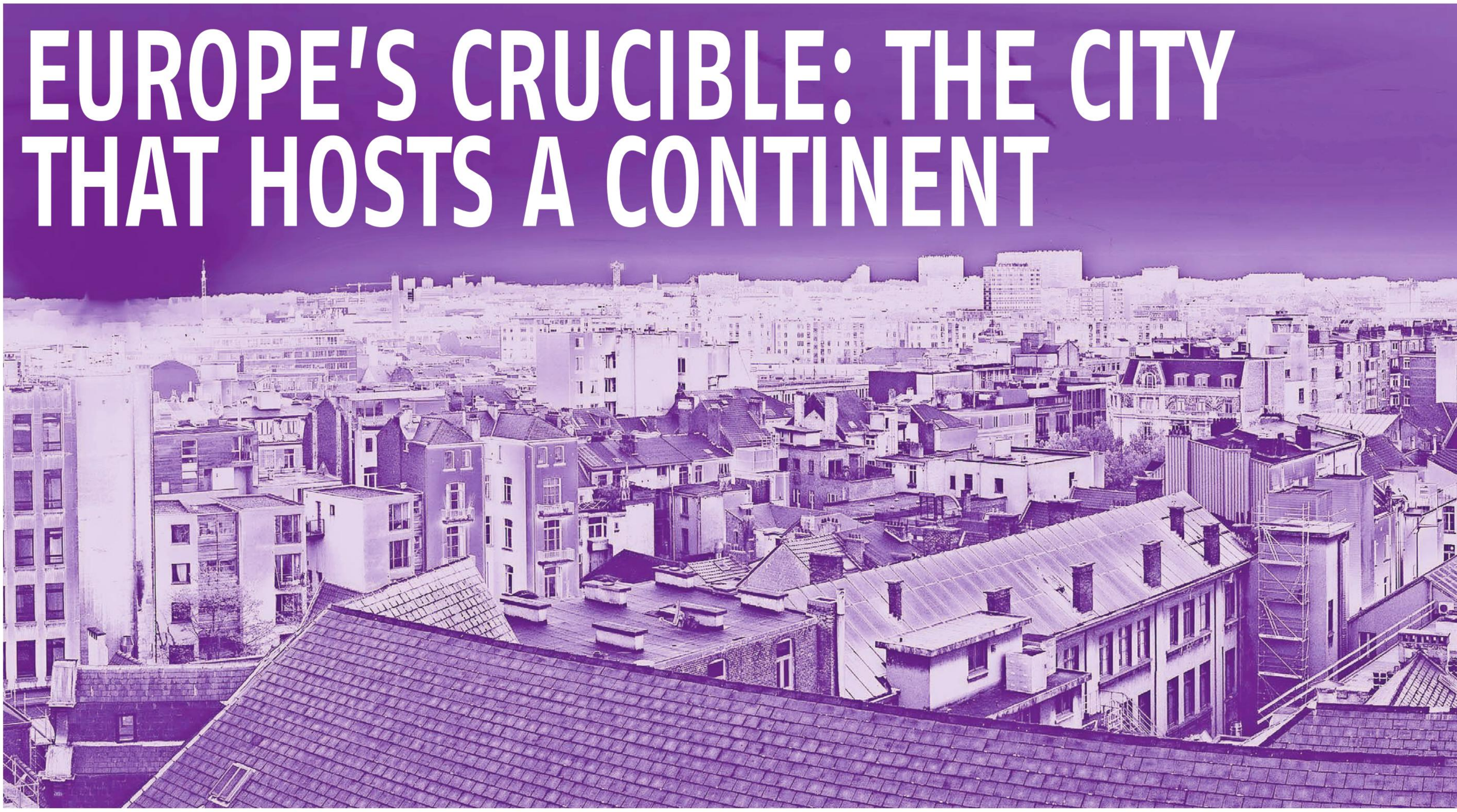
EUROPE'S CRUCIBLE: THE CITY THAT HOSTS A CONTINENT



Belgian author **ANNELIES BECK** reflects on the role that Brussels has played as the capital of the EU and a focus for its people

Umberto Eco's response to my first question was booming laughter. We were sitting in a taxi, cruising along the Rue Royal through Brussels, the capital of Europe. I was a young journalist at the time, working on my first novel (facts alone didn't do the human experience justice, I felt). He was Umberto Eco, the Italian writer and European intellectual.

We were making a detour on the way to the airport, allowing me to steal some time for an interview. I had asked him whether he liked Brussels and he had laughed. "Considering that you live here, politeness requires me to say 'Yes, of course'. It's not an interesting question." This was the beginning of our conversation.

It was July 2001. Looking back now it feels like the last innocent summer: 9/11 was still a few months away; Facebook wouldn't start holding our attention hostage for another year or two; and climate change wasn't considered more of a threat than it had been in the 1980s and 1990s when we all wore T-shirts saying: "No time to waste."

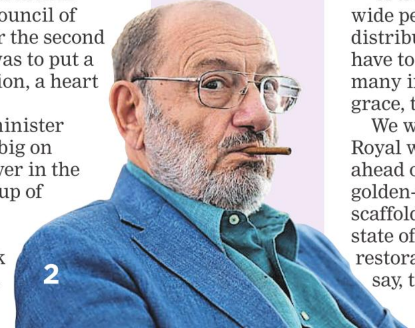
I was indeed living in Brussels and that summer, Europe came to town. That is to say, Brussels had been the official capital of the European Union for years already, of course. The EU had landed in Brussels much like a shard of glass lodged in a hand.

It was a separate part of the city where buildings with mirrored windows suggested transparency rather than offered it; a beer was more expensive in this quarter, and 'eurocrats' flew in and out every week to earn big paycheques.

Reporting on what was going on in the EU was, more often than not, focussed on its institutions rather than on Europeans. In short, not many people living in Brussels, or beyond for that matter, felt the EU pertained to them, in spite of the euro and the cheap labour that it made possible.

But all of that was going to change. Belgium had taken on the six-month rotating presidency of the council of European heads of states for the second half of that year. The idea was to put a heart into the European Union, a heart called Brussels.

The then Belgian prime minister Guy Verhofstadt – who was big on symbolism and a firm believer in the EU – brought together a group of wise men (and two women) from all over Europe to discuss the best way to mark Brussels as a capital of and, most importantly, for all Europeans. (Yes, in 2001 it was still possible to include only two women among those great minds.)



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CAPITAL CENTRAL:
1 A tinted view of Brussels at sunset

2 Umberto Eco

Photos: Jacopo Raule/Getty Images

"Could it be a building? A piece of music? A monument?," the prime minister wondered aloud. It was up to the gathered sages to decide. They discussed the matter over dinner at Erasmus House, the site where Desiderius Erasmus – a humanist and the prototypical European intellectual – stayed for a few months in 1521, writing letters, enjoying the beautiful garden and discussing the state of the world with his friends.

One of the participants in the 21st-century version of this exchange of ideas was Umberto Eco, the man I shared a taxi with at the end of that day. It hadn't been made clear yet what the result was of all the brainstorming and wining and dining at Erasmus House. (And as it turned out, it never would be.) Eco, however, had a personal view he didn't mind sharing.

"A true city is like a theatre. It offers wide perspectives with a finely calculated distribution of grand monuments. You have to be careful: throw around too many imposing buildings and they lose grace, think of what the Nazis did."

We were still driving along the Rue Royal with the Palais de Justice looming ahead of us, a giant building with a golden-tinged dome, shrouded in scaffolding for decades, in a perpetual state of salvage from ruin, as opposed to restoration or improvement. Needless to say, the metaphor wasn't lost on Eco.

"It is not enough for Brussels, or any city, to have a brilliant artist design a wonderful monument, compose a piece of music or sculpt a statue, for people to relate to it as the capital of the EU."

We made a stop in the European Quarter and drank a coffee – a proper coffee – on a terrace at the Luxemburg Square, in front of the European parliament. "I can only see it working as a hub, a place where every Erasmus student feels obliged, intellectually and morally, to spend at least three months during the course of their studies. A city where the ruling class of tomorrow learn the trade, form bonds with each other and the city."

His eyes lit up. "And I mean bonding in the most literal sense: marrying each other, learning each other's languages, appreciating each other's food."

Eco told me stories about his wife, who is German, and about his favourite food. "In 30 years, Europe will be a colourful continent, not only in terms of skin but in terms of ideas. It will be a continent where all kinds of religions will have to live together. To learn to appreciate each other's culinary traditions is a fundamental way to learn about one another's mentality!"

It was an exciting idea: Brussels as both the pole of attraction and the springboard for the next generation, the first truly European generation, from Warsaw to London, from Stockholm to Madrid, whether they'd be the ones manning the institutions, artistically shaping European reality or exchanging

1

recipes and vegetables, grown back home. His vision appealed to me, being of the interrail generation myself and having studied abroad: I could imagine this whirl of like-minded young potentials all too well. But could it ever work for everyone?

It was time for Eco to catch that plane, and he did.

Today there's no way you could risk a detour through Brussels' city centre in a taxi (or even an Uber) on the way to the airport. Twenty years on, cars are losing the fight for public space to pedestrians, electrical bikes and public transport, but until the battle is truly over, people pay in time, health and nerves. The Palais de Justice is still standing, held up by scaffolding. In the European Quarter, more glass buildings have arisen, adding to the labyrinthine aspect of that part of the city, with the fissures of the financial crisis of 2008 plastered over.

The terrorist attacks in 2016 laid bare other tears in the city's fabric. Brussels has changed and so has Europe.

I wonder what Umberto Eco would make of Europe today – he died in February 2016. No doubt his ideas of 2001 about enlightened and truly European bureaucrats and politicians are deemed elitist by some. His understanding of the need for recognition of local and historical traditions would be considered provincial by others.

Whereas back then the shape and future of Europe seemed to have been the prerogative of politicians and intellectuals having a civil conversation, the question today is of a much more pressing nature than the role of 'Brussels'.

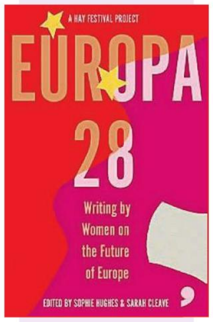
The conversation has turned into a shouting match between parties calling each other names ('elites', 'nationalists', 'cosmopolitans', etc.) and, more importantly, challenging the role of the European Union. The EU is too much or too little, too loud or too quiet, too unified or too divided.

Men continue to pontificate, sometimes wisely too. But, thankfully, more and more women now raise their voices and make themselves heard. Eco was right: bonds are being forged across boundaries. 'Climate kids' take to the streets, inspired by a Swedish girl, and hold the EU to account for what it is failing to do. Young men from Hungary to Belgium calling themselves '*identitaires*' challenge the idea of the EU altogether.

The debate is no longer about symbols or a shared capital. The next generation is talking about survival, recognition, dignity, and home, albeit in many different and often contradictory ways.

Whether it is being rejected as the root of all evil or embraced as the start of the solution, the EU is finally, and somewhat ironically, at the heart of the debate. On second thought, 'debate' may be too civilised a word for the clash that is being fought on so many different fronts: on the streets and social media more so than in political arenas.

Politics has become a spectacle, a theatrical event with effect trumping essence. It quickens the blood and raises the stakes in equal measure. The 'inner emigration' of Europeans who don't feel at home anymore in their own country and who, as Hannah Arendt put it, withdraw to an interior realm, into the "invisibility of thinking and feeling", is as much part of what threatens to break up the European construction as the perceived threat of actual people crossing the Mediterranean.



Migration is not only a movement of people but also of minds. Citizens hesitate between wearily shaking their head or turning their backs on it all.

But a story is being written and it will play itself out far beyond the theatre that is Brussels. Some scripts are being prompted from the wings across the ocean, whispering the catchphrase 'Take Back Control'. Others are being tested in citizens' panels or forums that are redesigning democracy with an eye on the future.

Every European, old and new, here or on the way, has a stake in this story – stories, plural. There are many, many sides to the debate. Eco's 'wide perspectives' are ever more fractured, much like a kaleidoscope wherein fragments constantly realign themselves in unimaginable patterns.

So how to bond and bridge all those elements, all those people in their multifaceted individuality? How to leave room to manoeuvre and at the same time hold the continent together? Is it possible to blend and at the same time respect the where, whence and how of the parts that make up the whole? Brexit taught us that breaking away comes at a cost.

Since the last European elections, it looks like fewer parties want out, but more – and perhaps louder ones – want it done differently.

A foundation of facts won't suffice to hold up the European project. An empty theatre, no matter how grand it looks, is a soulless place. There's not just the one story that should hijack the stage and occupy the theatre. There should be room for more. Stories can work in a myriad of ways; they are not in themselves good or bad. But they can unlock hearts and minds and lay bare the shared humanity of all, more so than newly invented symbols. They can put a wedge in shrill sounding certainties that are sold as unassailable truths.

I'm still a journalist, trying to gain footing in fact. But I'm ever more the novelist, examining the more complicated ways in which we exist. My first question to Eco, "Do you like Brussels?", wasn't an interesting one – he was right. There are other questions to be asked: "What do you think of…?, How do you feel about… ?", "Who are you…?, What is your life like… ?", "What do you suggest…?" Questions that set off stories. The power of a story lies in a voice speaking up. The power of a story lies in its multiplicity. The power of every story lies in it being listened to.

■ Annelies Beck represents Belgium in the Hay Festival Europa28 project; her essay was originally published in the anthology *Europa28: Writing by Women on the Future of Europe* (Comma Press), out now

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CALLED IN TO QUESTION

THE SHOW THAT BROUGHT TV INTO DISREPUTE

RICHARD LUCK looks back at one of the greatest scandals of the TV age

RIGGED:
1 *Twenty-One* host Jack Barry with contestant Charles Van Doren, right
Photo: Getty Images

Among this year's most anticipated dramas is ITV's *Quiz*. Starring *Succession*'s Matthew Macfadyen, *Fleabag*'s Sian Clifford, *Catastrophe*'s Mark Bonnar, and, as TV's Chris Tarrant, Bafta winner Michael Sheen, the three-part series focuses on the 2001 game show scandal which saw Major Charles Ingram splutter his way to success on *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* only for his skulduggery to be sniffed out.

But long before the coughing major's infamous television appearance, a game show scandal rocked America to such a degree that those involved were summoned before Congress.

As Charles Ingram's transgressions have now been dramatised, so Charles Van Doren's indiscretions were brought to the big screen by Robert Redford in 1994. However, if you've seen the Oscar-nominated *Quiz Show*, you only know so much about the scandal that held 1950s America in thrall. For rather than an isolated incident, the behind-the-scenes shenanigans at the television sensation that was *Twenty-One* were symptomatic of a fraud that enveloped countless programmes and all the major networks.

But first, some background. The phenomenal success of television in the 1950s was in large part due to the popularity of the game show. Being relatively cheap to stage, programmes like *The $64,000 Question*, *Tic-Tac-Dough* and *Twenty-One* were loved not only by the public but by the TV execs who could use the popularity of their programming to demand huge sponsorship fees.

Should you ever have a mind to watch vintage American TV shows, you'll be struck by how every programme is "brought to you" by one product or another.

Often it was huge corporations who lent their names to a particular evening's entertainment: *The Colgate Comedy Hour*, *The US Steel Hour*, *The Hallmark Hall of Fame*, *Kraft Television Theater* – to settle down for a night in front of the gogglebox in 1950s America was to expose yourself to the early successes of the *Mad Men* era.

In the case of NBC's *Twenty-One*, the programming was endorsed by Geritol, an iron and vitamin supplement designed to rid America on that most wretched of conditions, 'tired blood'. Since the pharmaceutical firm had a lot of money riding on the show – some $3.5 million – so they had a lot of say so regarding its content.

When the debut programme tanked, in large part because of the ignorance of the contestants, Geritol insisted that changes be made and fast. As *Twenty-One* producer Dan Enright recalls: "From that moment on, we decided to rig *Twenty-One*."

To ensure the show lived up to the sponsor's expectations, Enright and his producing partner Al Freedman first set out to find an everyman contestant that viewers could get behind. Step forward the "unstumpable" Herbert Milton Stempel, a former GI-turned-postal worker with an extraordinary head for facts and figures.

Not that Stempel's intellect was particularly important since Enright and Freedman had agreed that, in order to ensure each programme had the right outcome, native New Yorker Herb would be supplied with the right answers.

And so it was that for six weeks in the autumn of 1956, Herb Stempel put to the sword America's finest minds. This was no mean feat since *Twenty-One*'s format was far from straightforward. At the start of the show, reigning champ Herb and his new opponent entered separate isolation booths, within which the competitors could not see or hear one another nor the audience. Host Jack Barry would then announce the category for the first round and ask the challenger to select a point value between 1 and 11; the higher the value selected, the more difficult the question. If they answered correctly, the points were added to the challenger's score; get it wrong and the points were subtracted. The formula would then repeat, only with Herb in the hot seat. Throughout this – really rather laborious – procedure, the host ensured that neither competitor was aware of their rival's score.

The ultimate aim was to score 21 points. Should the challenger attain said score first, they were free to listen to the champion as they tried to tie the game. Fail to get the question right, and a new champion was crowned. If a show ended in a 21–21 tie, the scores were erased and a new game was played.

Though *Twenty-One* had plenty of shortcomings on the formatting front, the viewing public simply couldn't get enough of Herb, the guy from Queens with the glasses and the unfortunate hair who'd never graduated college but seemed to know everything about everything. Then Stempel's star began to fade, and Geritol, Enright and Freedman decided that a change needed to be made.

The answer to their prayers came in the shape of novelist, university educator and scion of a literary empire, Charles Van Doren. Son of the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Mark, nephew of the Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer Carl, Van Doren lived in the largest of literary shadows.

Quite why he should have wanted to appear on a game show was anyone's guess. Was he desperate to be something other than Mark Van Doren's son? Did he just want to have some fun and make a little money? Either way, Enright and

QUIZ SHOW FRAUDSTERS:
2 Charles Van Doren testifies before the House Legislative Oversight Committee in 1959

3 Former *Twenty-One* contestant Herbert Stempel testifies during the inquiry into the show

4 Charles Ingram and his wife Diana arrive at Southwark Crown Court in 2003. The couple were convicted of deception together with accomplice Tecwen Whittock after cheating to win the jackpot on *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?*

Photos: Getty Images

VAN DOREN VS STEMPEL - THE FINAL SHOWDOWN

So, here they are – the questions that were put to Charles Van Doren and Herbert Stempel the fateful night of December 5, 1956. With the men tied at 21-all after question four, the scores were reset and a new game commenced. Van Doren got only question two wrong, while Stempel 'flubbed' numbers three and five. Would you have fared any better?

Van Doren Question One (for eight points, category: Civil War): Because of a disagreement with his commanding general, Ulysses S Grant was placed under arrest for a brief time in 1862. Who was the commanding general of the Union Army at that time?
Answer: HW Halleck

Stempel Question One (for nine points, category: Civil War): Because he did not sanction secession, this man was the only Southerner who refused to leave the United States Senate when his state seceded from the Union in June of 1861. Name him and the state he represented.
Answer: Andrew Johnson, Tennessee

Van Doren Question Two (for nine points, category: Boxing): Name the three heavyweight champions immediately preceding Joe Louis
Answer: James J Braddock, Max Baer, Primo Carnera

Stempel Question Two (for seven points, category: Boxing): One of the most famous promoters in boxing history, the man responsible for the first $1 million gate, is largely responsible for prize fights being staged out of doors. Name this man.
Answer: Tex Rickard

Van Doren Question Three (for 10 points, category: Movies & Movie Stars): In 1954, the Oscars for Best Supporting Actress, Best Director and Best Screenplay all went to people who worked on the film *On the Waterfront*. Name these people.
Answer: Eva Marie Saint, Elia Kazan, Budd Schulberg

Stempel Question Three (for 5 points, category: Movies & Movie Stars): What motion picture won the Best Picture Academy Award for 1955?
Answer: *Marty*

Van Doren Question Four (for 11 points, category: Explorers): Pizarro was an early Spanish explorer who discovered and conquered a vast civilisation. Name the civilisation he conquered, the country it was in and the leader of the civilisation at the time of the conquest.
Answer: Inca, Peru, Atahualpa

Stempel Question Four (for 10 points, category: Explorers): Four great voyages were made by Christopher Columbus and many different places were among his discoveries. Tell us on which voyage – the first, second, third or fourth – each of the following places was discovered: the Virgin Islands, St Lucia, Hispaniola and South America.
Answer: Second, Fourth, Fourth, Third

Van Doren Question Five (for eight points, category: Newspapers): Grandsons of Joseph Medil, two of the most successful journalists from 1914 on were the owners and managers of the *Chicago Tribune* and the *New York Daily News*.
Answer: Colonel Robert McCormick and Joseph Patterson

Stempel Question Five (for 11 points, category: Newspapers): One of the most revered names in American journalism is that of a Kansas newspaper publisher who died in 1944. Tell us this man's name, the name of his newspaper, and the title of the editorial he wrote which made him and his paper nationally known.
Answer: William Allan White, *The Emporia Gazette*, What's The Matter With Kansas?

Van Doren and Stempel Question Six (each for 10 points, category: Kings): It's well known that some of Henry VIII's six wives fared better than others. He divorced his first wife, Catherine of Aragon and married his sixth Catherine Parr just a few years before he died. Name the second, third, fourth and five wives of Henry XVIII and their fates
Answer: Anne Boleyn - beheaded, Jane Seymour - died, Anne Of Cleves - divorced, Catherine Howard - beheaded.

Freedman couldn't believe their luck when young Charles walked blinking into their arena.

Handsome and charming, Charles Van Doren was very much the opposite of the nervy, nerdy Herb Stempel. A series of draws between the two men drove *Twenty-One*'s ratings to new heights. Come December 6, 1956, more than 15 million Americans were watching as the unthinkable occurred and Herbert Stempel was finally stumped. And on such an easy question. As the man himself would later recall:

"The question was, 'What motion picture won the Academy Award for 1955?' I knew that the answer was *Marty*, but Dan Enright specifically wanted me to miss that question. This hurt me very deeply because this was one of my favourite pictures of all times... As I was trying to come up with the answer, I could have changed my mind. I could have said, 'The answer is *Marty*'... I would have won. There would have been no Charles Van Doren, no famous celebrity."

But instead, Herb said *On the Waterfront*, as he'd previously agreed to, and shortly thereafter the Stempel era was over.

As for Van Doren's spell on the

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programme, it proved such a success that he wound up on the cover of *Time*.

Having been convinced to go along with the fraud on the grounds that it would do wonders for the cause of education, Charles Van Doren racked up $129,000 during his three month-long winning streak. When he eventually lost to lawyer Vivienne Nearing on March 11, 1957, Charles was offered a lucrative three-year deal with NBC. And that might have been the end of it were it not for something called *Dotto*.

Dotto was a CBS/NBC game show that was doing pretty good business right up until it was scrapped overnight in August 1958. The man responsible for the plug being pulled was stand-by contestant Edward Hilgemeier who'd happened upon a notebook belonging to fellow competitor Marie Winn. When he realised that the book contained the questions and answers that were to be used during Winn's appearance, Hilgemeier went to the authorities. In next to no time, *Dotto* disappeared from the TV schedules.

Within four months of *Dotto*'s cancellation, *The $64,000 Question*, *Tic-Tac-Dough* and *Twenty-One* were also taken off air. Aware that a tsunami of trouble was coming their way, the execs hoped such drastic measures would negate the necessary for increased oversight. Rather than quelling official interest, this sudden scrapping of hugely lucrative media entities only increased the curiosity of lawmakers.

In New York, prosecutor Joseph Stone convened a grand jury. Those game show contestants who appeared before it either denied all knowledge of a fix or freely admitted to having gone along with the demands of the producers.

And while all this was going on, Herbert Stempel was busy telling anyone who'd listen about the stink behind the scenes on *Twenty-One*. Conversations with journalist Jack O'Brian had led to Herb going before Congress in 1957. Two years later, on November 2, 1959, Charles Van Doren also made his way to Washington to face the music.

Van Doren's appearance before Congress provides Robert Redford's *Quiz Show* with its ending. As for how the decorated actor-director came to make his movie, they'd been talk of a film about the scandal dating back to the 1970s. In the late 1980s, Oliver Stone expressed an interest in the subject. Barry Levinson (*Rain Man*) and Steven Soderbergh (*Sex, lies and videotape*) also had a movie about the *Twenty-One* affair on the go, only for Tim Robbins and Richard Dreyfuss – their choices to play Van Doren and Stempel respectively – to walk off the project.

It was then that Redford entered the picture. A hot talent once again on the back of *Indecent Proposal*'s unfathomable success, Redford used that acting 'triumph' to nail a gig to both produce and direct *Quiz Show*. Besides a keen interest in the American condition and a passion for truth and justice, Redford had a personal interest in the game show scandals, having appeared as a contestant on Merv Griffin's *Play Your Hunch* in 1957.

Fobbed off with fishing equipment instead of a $75 fee and asked to change his occupation from actor to painter as apparently they'd had too many of the former on the programme, he knew that TV in the '50s was a rum deal. What's more, when watching Charles Van Doren on *Twenty-One*, the 22-year-old Redford had been convinced that the university professor was hamming it up for the cameras. "We were experiencing a fundamental breach in morality," he would later claim in one of his more self-righteous moments.

Hiring *Washington Post* journalist Paul Attanasio to adapt Richard Goodwin's memoir *Remembering America: A Voice From The Sixties*, the director cast the new-to-film Ralph Fiennes as Van Doren while the role of Stempel went to John Turturro.

Naturally, for the purposes of drama, names were changed, composite characters created and timelines drastically altered. Rather than a cog in a vast machine, Goodwin became lead Congressional investigator, a showy part that wound up going to Rob Morrow of *Northern Exposure* fame.

And the icing on the cake? Redford convinced Sir Paul Scofield to come out of retirement and play Charles' father, the eminent Mark Van Doren.

The film Redford wound up making resembles a particularly well-mounted episode of *Mad Men*. Attanasio's witty-to-the-point-of being-too-pleased-with-itself screenplay allows all the actors to shine, with Mira Sorvino particularly good as Dick Goodwin's better half and David Paymer and Hank Azaria quite excellent as Enright and Freedman, the men who put the fix into effect.

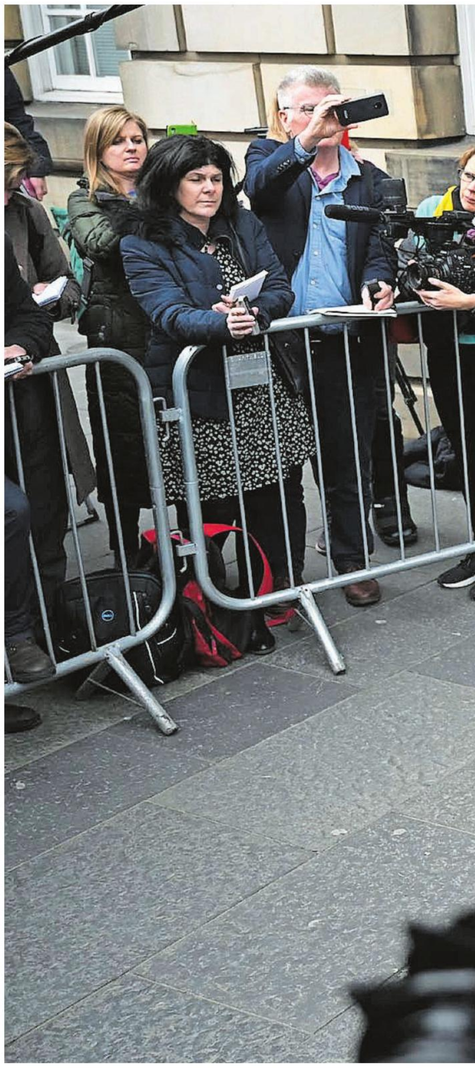
With so much acting talent on display, it's a little odd that *Quiz Show*'s key speech should be delivered by a director, Martin Scorsese who portrays the Geritol executive who insists that Stempel be replaced. "NBC is gonna go on," the exec explains to Dick Goodwin. "The quiz shows will be back. Why fix them? Think about it – you could do exactly the same thing just by making the questions easier. See, the audience didn't tune in to see some amazing display of intellectual ability. They just wanted to watch the money."

And as his character explains why Congress's quiz show investigation was bound to run aground, so he also points up the enduring appeal of *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*, a scandalised game show that has now returned to prime time.

Sure, each affair had a few sacrificial lambs: the *Millionaire* fiasco culminated in Charles and Diana Ingram receiving fines and suspended prison sentences, as did their accomplice Tecwen Whittock. Meanwhile in the States, Charles Van Doren was publicly shamed before being allowed to return to his teaching job and accept a lucrative deal to write for *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. But after spending a few years on the sidelines, all the TV figures involved in the rigging of game shows were back producing – you guessed it! – game shows. Only Herbert Stempel really suffered; his reward for eventually coming clean being a lifetime spent working for New York's Department of Transportation.

There's a reason why both *Quiz* and *Quiz Show* ought to be of particular interest to modern audiences, namely the evolution of social media. For there was a time when, mounting one's high horse took long enough to give the victim time to get out of the way. Had Charles Van Doren or the Ingrams been found to be at fault in 2020, they'd have been hounded out on Twitter before the first ad break.

Hostilities may not break out for a while, but the verdict in the Alex Salmond trial looks set to unleash a period of dramatic upheaval in the SNP. **MAURICE SMITH** reports



Is there any end to the controversy that has dogged Alex Salmond since his departure from Scottish politics in 2017?

Cleared last week of 13 sexual assault charges involving nine women at the High Court in Edinburgh, Salmond emerged to issue a grim warning of vengeance and recrimination.

His followers have gathered loyally on social media and newspaper websites to declare Salmond variously as a victim of the "mainstream media", the establishment and even the security services.

Supporters have demanded resignations without being very clear who should resign. Some even want his accusers to be named in public in what would be a clear breach of the law regarding sex assault cases.

His own defence counsel, Gordon Jackson QC, has had to refer himself to the Faculty of Advocates after a video emerged of him openly discussing the case on a train journey home to Glasgow during the trial.

Sitting in a busy carriage, he is alleged to have named one of the women giving evidence against his client.

To complicate things, Jackson is the dean, or head, of that same faculty. He is also a former Labour politician who lost his seat in 2007 to Nicola Sturgeon, first minister of Scotland and the woman believed in some quarters not only to have been Salmond's successor, but also his nemesis.

So far, so complex. The truth is that after more than a year of intense speculation, and an 11-day trial that acquitted the former first minister, Alex Salmond remains controversial.

Attention was something he relished for so long in a career spanning four decades; today, few would predict it might end well for the 65-year old whose best years in politics are probably behind him.

CELEBRATION: Alex Salmond bumps elbows with defence counsel Gordon Jackson QC following his acquittal at Edinburgh High Court

Photo: Getty Images

There are rumours, not denied, that Salmond has an eye on next year's Scottish elections. The scenario is that he rejoins the SNP – from which he resigned while he fought his court case – and seeks the nomination for the Donside seat in the north-east of Scotland, previously his fiefdom since he first won the Banff and Buchan Westminster seat in 1987.

He may rejoin the party – even that is a moot point, given the revelations in court about his behaviour towards female colleagues – but to win such a nomination he would probably have to see a change of party leadership before May 2021.

Most of the rumours about Sturgeon's supposed desire to stand down appear to stem from circles closer to the Salmond camp. The first minister has insisted she intends to lead the party into the 2021 elections.

Scotland's political class watched Salmond closely as he emerged from Court Three on Edinburgh's Royal Mile last week. The real world may be all-absorbed in the Covid-19 crisis and all of its implications, something Salmond alluded to as he addressed the media and a handful of supporters defying lockdown to express their backing. He could not resist a dig at his detractors, however.

Found not guilty of 12 charges of indecent assault, sexual assault and one attempted rape – and "not proven" in the case of an alleged assault with intent to

ACQUITTED: Former Scottish First Minister Alex Salmond leaves Edinburgh High Court after being cleared of the sexual assault of nine women

Photo: Getty Images

SNP SET FOR BLOODLETTING AFTER SALMOND ACQUITTAL

SALMOND'S RISE AND FALL

A former economist for the Royal Bank of Scotland, Salmond was first elected for as MP for Banff and Buchan in 1987, defeating a Tory incumbent and becoming one of three SNP representatives at Westminster. He become party leader in 1990 and was elected to the new Scottish parliament in 1999. He stood down as leader the following year. He left the Scottish parliament in 2001 to lead the SNP group in the House of Commons. Then, in 2004, he was elected SNP leader again, and returned to Holyrood at the 2007 election. The SNP were the largest party and Salmond became first minister, in a minority government with the Scottish Green Party.

The SNP won an overall majority in 2011 and called for a referendum on independence. He led the Yes campaign in 2014 and resigned as first minister after the result.

He returned to Westminster in 2015 but lost his seat in 2017 – his first defeat as a parliamentary candidate since his election 30 years earlier.

After his defeat he began hosting a show on RT. Then, in 2018 he resigned from the SNP to face allegations of sexual misconduct.

rape – Salmond could probably have said a lot more than he did.

He lamented that his defence was prevented from using some evidence gathered during a 2019 judicial review of the Scottish government's initial investigation of him; a review which awarded him £512,000 in legal costs.

"There was certain evidence I would like to have seen led in this trial but for a variety of reasons we weren't able to do so. At some point that information, that fact and that evidence will see the light of day," said Salmond.

The heavy hint is that somehow Salmond and his legal team have accessed some explosive evidence that they were prevented from using during his trial.

That most likely refers to evidence – obtained during the discovery stages of the judicial review – including communications between various women whose accusations were ultimately taken up by the Crown, leading to last month's trial.

The trial judge, Lady Dorrian, Scotland's second most senior judicial figure, was at pains to ensure that the proceedings covered only the criminal charges. In preliminary hearings she ruled against the presentation of evidence – in the form of hundreds of communications including emails and WhatsApp messages – mainly circulating within the Scottish government.

Salmond's defence hinted heavily at conspiracy. Defence counsel accepted the litany of accusations about kissing, groping and inappropriate behaviour. On the two more serious charges they offered different versions of events. In the case of the "intent to rape" incident of December 2013 involving an alleged victim known as Woman F, a civil servant, they said that a consensual incident had occurred. Later, the then first minister had apologised to the woman involved and she had agreed the matter was closed.

On another accusation, of attempted rape in June 2014, Salmond said that the incident described by Woman H in court was based on a consensual encounter some months earlier. The defence produced witnesses who cast doubt on the allegation.

Prosecutor Alex Prentice QC painted a picture of a short-tempered, belligerent first minister prone to late drinking sessions that combined with work, often at his official residence in Edinburgh, Bute House. A procession of civil servants, special advisers and party campaigners visited or worked there, the atmosphere becoming more intense in the run-up to the independence referendum of September 2014.

"It is about a powerful man who used his power to satisfy his sexual desires with impunity. His conduct was intimidating. I suggest that the complainers are courageous, brave women," Prentice told the jury.

Each victim had been between 20 and 30 years younger than Salmond at the time of the alleged incidents. All of them had felt complaints would be ignored. They felt loyal to Salmond, or to the independence cause. Some said they felt they had to protect his reputation at a time of intense political pressure.

One alleged assault was said to have taken place on the same night the Treasury had leaked details to the BBC about RBS planning to move head office from Scotland in the event of a Yes vote.

Defence QC Jackson told the jury his client's behaviour was at times "inappropriate", but not criminal. "He would shout and bawl – so what? He could be a bugger to work with – so what?" asked Jackson. He quoted Woman K, who told the court the former first minister had grabbed her backside at an event. "She said 'I didn't think he was doing anything sexual at all, I thought it was a power thing'."

Salmond supporters seek retribution. Ultimately they blame a supposed cabal of civil servants and others close to Salmond's successor who allegedly saw a chance to rid the SNP of his legacy. Some believe Sturgeon is dragging her heels on independence.

Is there proof of such a conspiracy? Perhaps the former first minister does have some shocking evidence, a smoking gun. There is no doubt his first targets are known senior civil servants responsible for the initial investigation that led to the police becoming involved.

However, if for example a female staffer did urge others to come forward if they had complaints they wanted heard, is that a conspiracy?

This week, the nine complainers issued a joint statement that they were "devastated" by the verdict. "Many of us did speak up at the time of our incidents but were faced with procedures that could not deal with complaints against such a powerful figure.

"Others were silenced by fear of repercussions. It was our hope, as individuals, that through coming forward a this time we could achieve justice and enact change."

Sturgeon is going to have to explain what she knew of those initial complaints, and why she agreed to meet Salmond and others at her own home before the probe went further. A Scottish parliamentary inquiry into her handling of the affair was delayed by the trial, and will resume soon.

Meanwhile Salmond is supposedly writing a book about his trial "nightmare" and the alleged conspiracy. He will return to the screens with his TV show on Russia Today in due course. There is talk of a leadership challenge, but that seems unlikely.

His friends – people like his long-term adviser turned lobbyist Kevin Pringle – want Salmond to return to the SNP but remain in the background afterwards.

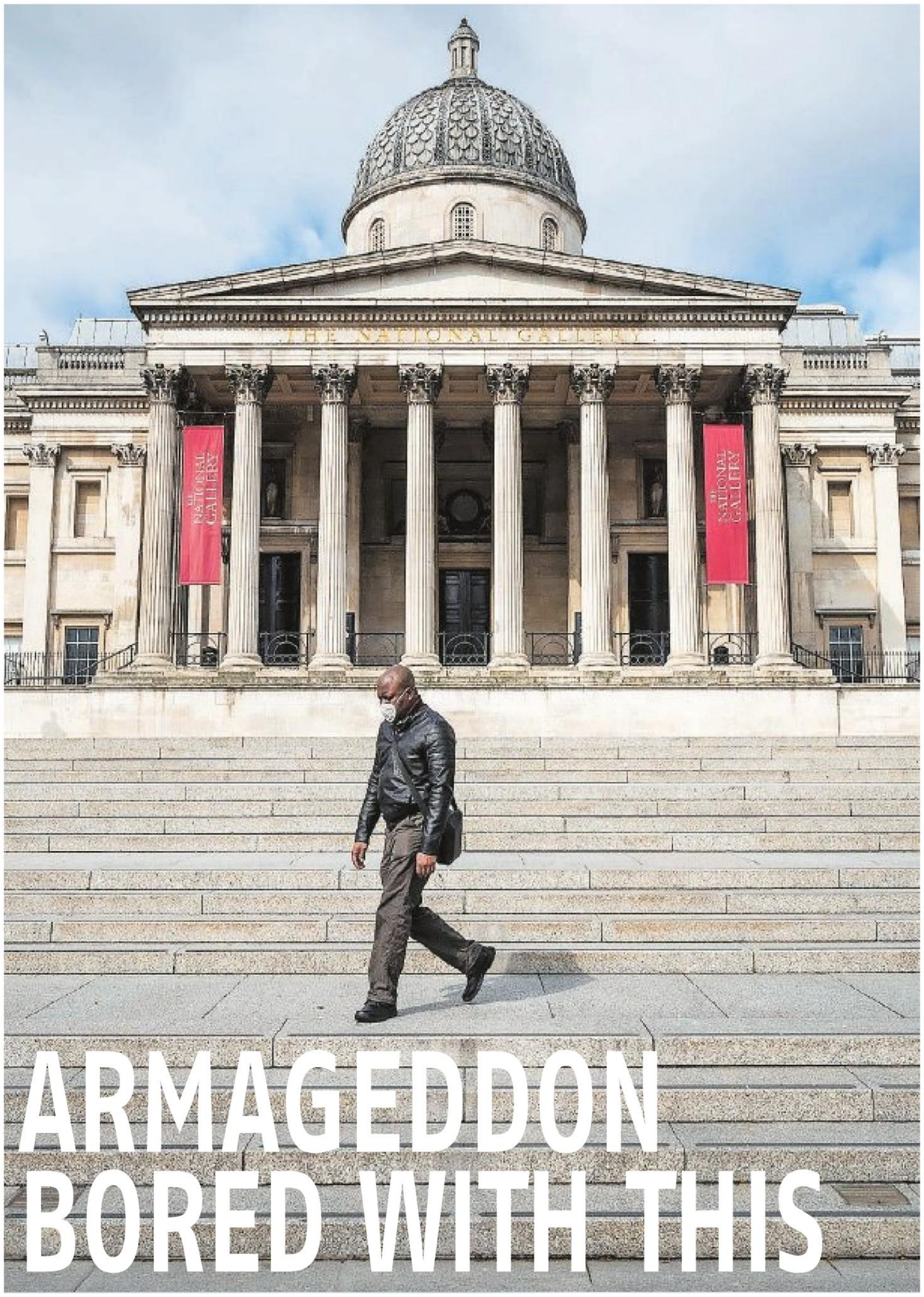
Whether he ever returns to active politics is another matter. Once an acknowledged 'big beast' of Scottish politics, can Alex Salmond resist a return to the limelight? The SNP is predicted to be the biggest party once again at Holyrood after next year's elections. The last thing they want is a leadership battle, or the return of a man described – with a little understatement – by his own defence counsel as "a bit Marmite".

EXPERTISE

Mitch Benn

Comedian, Musician, Writer

ARMAGEDDON BORED WITH THIS



UNDER SIEGE: A man wearing a protective face-mask walks through a deserted Trafalgar Square on March 30

Photo: Getty Images

First of all, I hope this finds you safe, well and still relatively sane. I know the waggish thing to do at the moment is to draw satirical comparison between our current plight and the various post-apocalyptic scenarios that film and TV have treated us to in the last few decades. (And for a comprehensive run-through of that particular genre, see my colleague James Oliver's article, starting on the facing page.)

I've made the occasional such observation myself; I noted the other day on Twitter that if you're able to take your daily government-sanctioned constitutional then it's definitely worth it if only to soak up the Walking Dead Without The Zombies vibe.

But let's face it, if this were in fact a zombie movie we'd have hit fast forward by now, having grown bored with this deceptive lull and gotten impatient to see the bit when they storm the good guys' compound and start biting people.

And I'm in a bit of an awkward situation (uh oh, here comes the Poor Me bit – don't worry, it's an incredibly minor gripe and I'll keep it brief) as a satirist, a professional sender-upper.

It's still very much my job to poke whatever fun there is to poke, even if I'm having to do it from home these days, and I'm aware that this leaves me walking a bit of an ethical tightrope in a situation which started with tragedy and is only likely to get more tragic as it goes on.

On the other hand, there's plenty about this crisis and the way we're reacting to it both institutionally and individually which is richly deserving of being, at the very least, discreetly giggled at.

For a start; in many of the aforementioned post-apocalyptic dystopian future melodramas, the plot revolves around bands of survivors doing battle for control of the last dwindling supplies of some vital resource. In *Mad Max 2* it's petrol; in its belated sequel *Mad Max: Fury Road* it's water; in *Waterworld* it's land; in *The Road* it's food, and so on.

Now, here we are, facing our own little Armageddon, and what's the precious resource we're all fighting each other for the last scraps of?

Toilet paper.

I'm sorry, but if you can't see anything funny about that then I don't know what to say to you.

I'm very aware that I'm in a better situation than most people. For a start, where I live I have access to lots of open green spaces, so not only is my daily walk very much worth taking, but it's relatively easy to maintain two metres distance from passers-by when I do.

And I'm under very few illusions that satire, for all that people tell me they find it cathartic and relieving, is in any way an "essential" occupation.

One positive I think we can already glean from this crisis is the fact that we're all being forced to re-examine what our society has, and has not, considered "essential" work in these recent decades.

Smug media types like me have been brutally disabused of any notion we might have had that the world revolves around, or indeed really *needs*, us.

The people we need are the people who do the *things* we need; the ones who feed us, clean up after us, the ones who keep the lights on and the water running, and most essentially of all, the ones who treat us when we're sick.

The very public outpourings of support for the NHS have been heartening; it remains to be seen if we remember that feeling as and when we emerge from this siege and continue to treat the service and its workers with that sort of respect and awe when times aren't so desperate – and, crucially, require our leaders to do likewise.

And I don't think I've ever been so relieved to see anyone as I was last Tuesday morning when the binmen turned out as usual.

It would be nice to think that a post-Covid-19 world might pay more respect – perhaps even more money – to those who do the actual work.

There are those in the media decrying any attempt to "politicise" this crisis, as there always are in any such situation (what that usually means is, "how dare the other side politicise this crisis while I'm trying to politicise it against them").

But this crisis is already a political one, as are all crises in a world governed by political considerations. Politics may not have initiated this outbreak but politics, both here and abroad, has determined its progress by determining the reactions of the various institutions charged with containing it.

And while I'm here, I'd like to wish a full and speedy recovery to both Boris Johnson and Dominic Cummings.

I don't wish disease upon anybody, and besides, I'm not finished with either of them yet.

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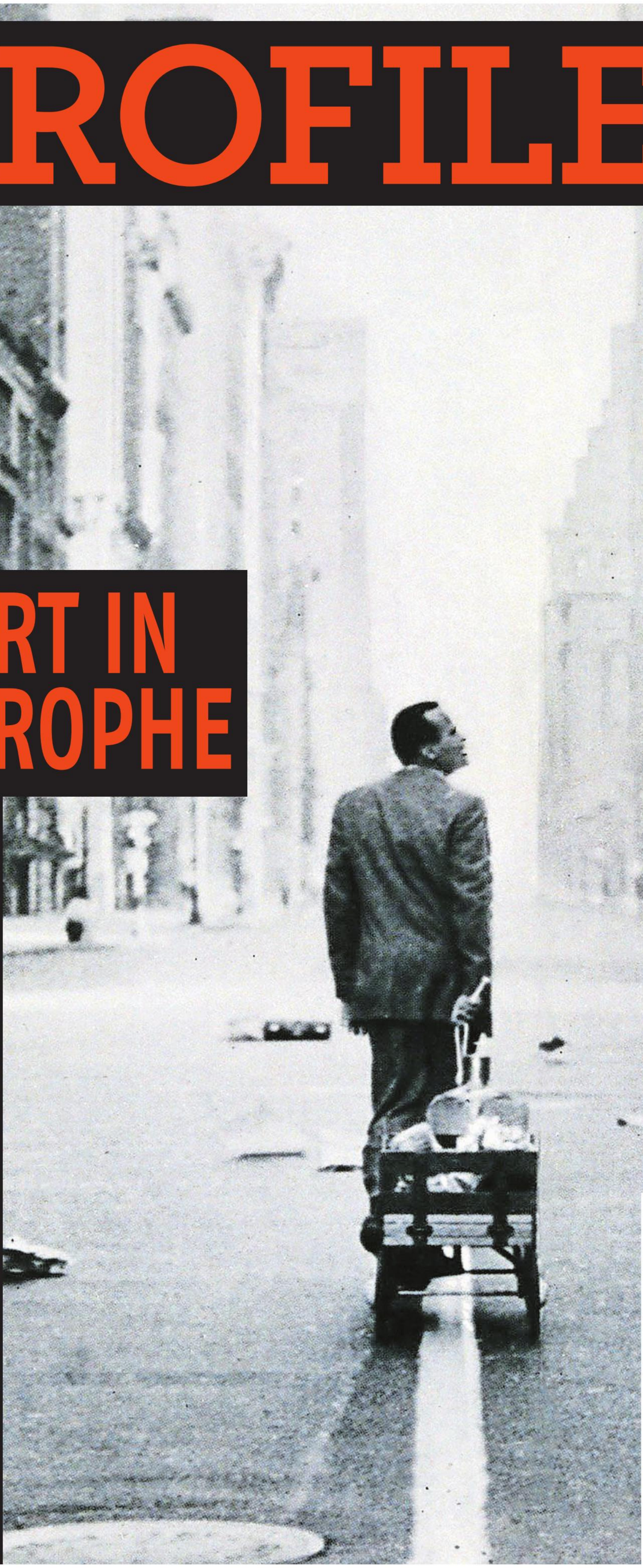

COMFORT IN CATASTROPHE

There might seem little obvious attraction in revisiting old ‘apocalypse movies’ in the current climate. But, says **JAMES OLIVER**, the genre actually offers a sense of reassurance you won’t find elsewhere

Strange times, right? Everyone seems to agree that “it’s like something from a movie” but no-one can agree which one.

When Covid-19 first made its presence felt in the West, people reached for the obvious: *Contagion*, an extremely prescient film from 2011 about a hardcore respiratory infection that originates in China, rocketed up the Amazon charts, propelled by a curiosity about this strange new threat.

Now it’s actually hit us, things are changing – or ‘mutating’ as we should probably say now we’re all obsessed with viruses.

Ransacked supermarkets, and the behaviour of (some of) those who stripped them brought forth other analogies. “It’s like *Mad Max*” is a frequent refrain across social media, referencing George Miller’s

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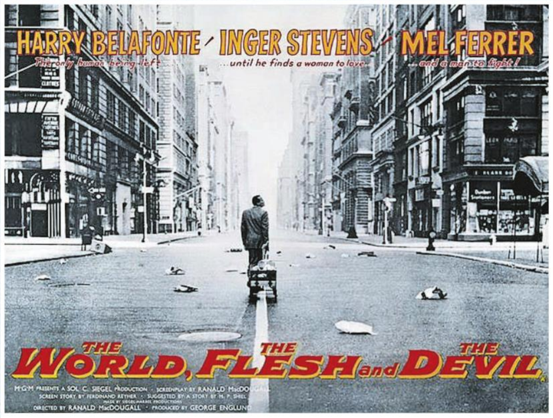

HARRY BELAFONTE
The only human being left...
INGER STEVENS
...until he finds a woman to love...
MEL FERRER
...and a man to fight!
THE WORLD, THE FLESH and THE DEVIL
M-G-M PRESENTS A SOL C. SIEGEL PRODUCTION · SCREENPLAY BY RANALD MacDOUGALL
SCREEN STORY BY FERDINAND REYHER · SUGGESTED BY A STORY BY M. P. SHIEL
DIRECTED BY RANALD MacDOUGALL · PRODUCED BY GEORGE ENGLUND

APOCALYSE THEN: Poster for the British release of *The World, the Flesh and the Devil* (1959), starring Harry Belafonte, Inger Stevens and Mel Ferrer Photo: Getty Images

From page 37

everyday tales of life in a post-apocalyptic wasteland.

This isn't entirely fair. In *Mad Max*, characters fought for control of precious petroleum; we've only been brawling over bog-roll (so far...). But even so, we're in uncharted waters right now. We're looking for comparisons to make sense of what's going on: that we're looking at movies set during and after various apocalypses tells its own story about the contemporary mood.

There is no shortage of films for us to draw on. Cinema is very good at worst case scenarios. It's ended the world hundreds of times, with many more near misses.

Most obviously, there's the Bomb. The apocalypse movie scarcely existed before humanity gave itself the ability to destroy all life of earth, but quickly established itself as a reliable box-office draw.

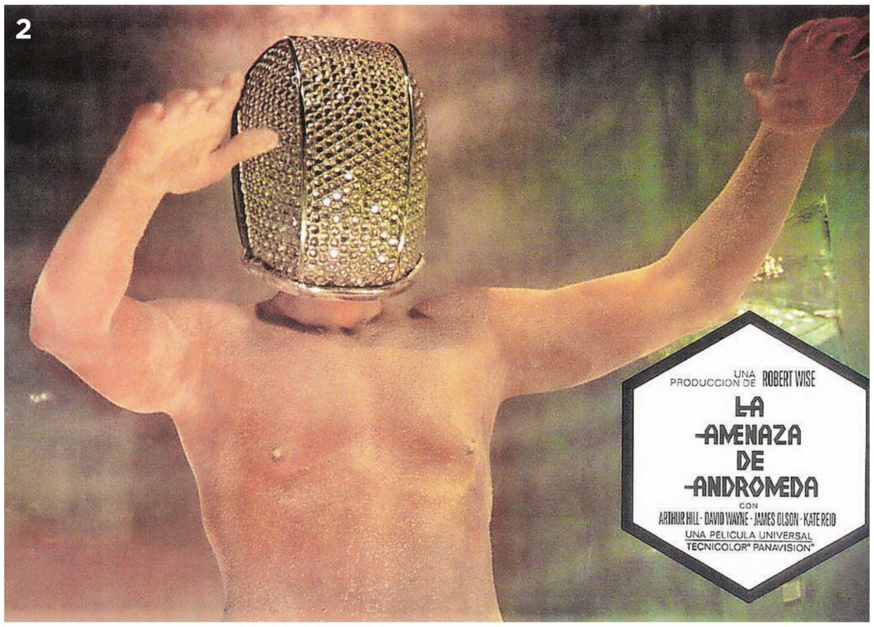
You might think people would prefer not to spend their precious leisure hours dwelling on the possible destruction of the planet but apparently not.

Many of those movies disguised the nuclear threat; although mainly marketed at kids, the 1950s monster boom was a direct reaction to atomic weapons – famously, *Godzilla* is a rubbery metaphor for the horrors of Hiroshima.

However, there were films that tackled things head-on, tentatively at first (*The World, The Flesh and The Devil,* from 1959), then more vividly: *On The Beach*, from the same year, featured big stars (Fred Astaire! Ava Gardner! Gregory Peck!) trying to survive down in Australia after a nuclear exchange, without much success.

Now, most atomic age anxiety movies aren't entirely relevant to our present situation (and that's a positive! That's something to hold on to!) Still, it might be worth looking at 1961's *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*. Here, the globe gets knocked off its axis during a nuclear test, causing the temperature to rise inexorably. Far more disciplined and downbeat than most 1950s sci-fi, it is a film about climate change made decades before anyone coined the phrase 'global warming'.

If it sometimes looks a little dated – a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UNA PRODUCCION DE ROBERT WISE
LA AMENAZA DE ANDROMEDA
CON
ARTHUR HILL · DAVID WAYNE · JAMES OLSON · KATE REID
UNA PELICULA UNIVERSAL
TECNICOLOR® PANAVISION®

3
BRAVINGTONS
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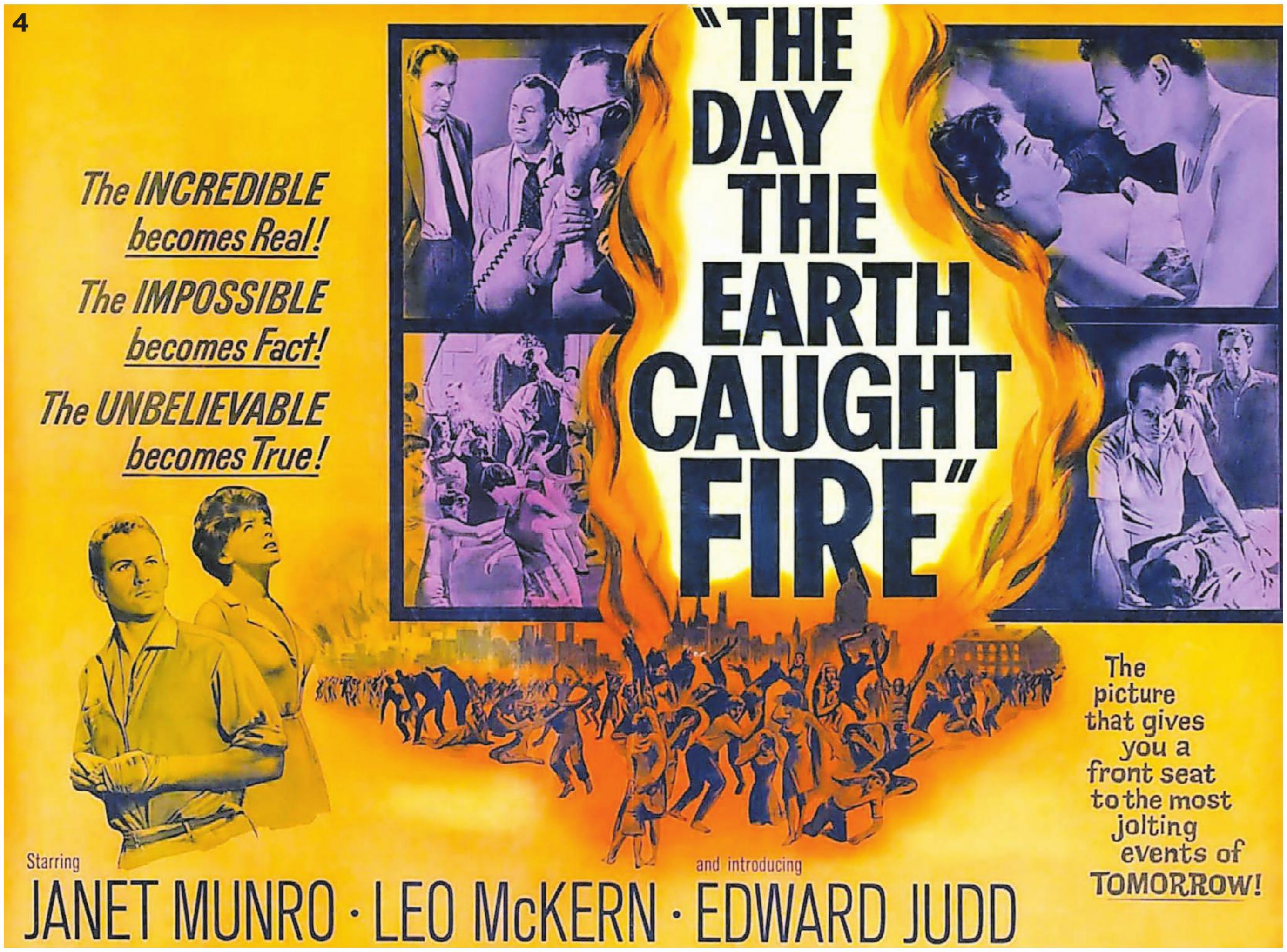
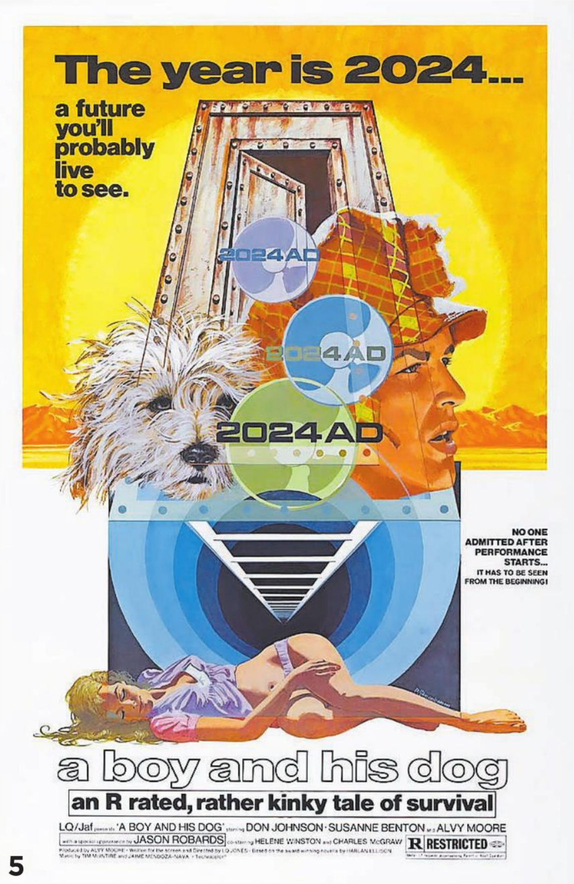

"THE DAY THE EARTH CAUGHT FIRE"
The INCREDIBLE becomes Real!
The IMPOSSIBLE becomes Fact!
The UNBELIEVABLE becomes True!
Starring
JANET MUNRO · LEO McKERN · and introducing EDWARD JUDD
The picture that gives you a front seat to the most jolting events of TOMORROW!


The year is 2024...
a future you'll probably live to see.
2024 AD
2024 AD
2024 AD
NO ONE ADMITTED AFTER PERFORMANCE STARTS...
IT HAS TO BE SEEN FROM THE BEGINNING!
a boy and his dog
an R rated, rather kinky tale of survival
LQ/Jaf presents 'A BOY AND HIS DOG' starring DON JOHNSON · SUSANNE BENTON and ALVY MOORE
JASON ROBARDS
HELENE WINSTON and CHARLES McGRAW
R RESTRICTED

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FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL: **1** Kevin Costner, Jeanne Tripplehorn and Tina Majorino in *Waterworld* (1995)

2 Poster for *The Andromeda Strain* (aka *La Amenaza De Andromenda*) (1971)

3 Edward Judd, right, in a scene from *The Day The Earth Caught Fire* (1961)

4 Poster for *The Day The Earth Caught Fire* (1961)

5 Poster for *A Boy And His Dog* (1975)

Photos: Getty Images

mad procession of beatniks and jazz musicians isn't quite as transgressive as once it was – human nature hasn't changed since it was made. We can still recognise the despair of the people on screen, the terror of ordinary folk faced with something they're powerless to influence.

For all people were worried about the Bomb in the 1950s and 1960s, everything else (rising prosperity, rising social mobility, all that post-war gubbins) gave more cause for optimism. Truth be told, the apocalypse movie didn't really get up to speed until that confidence started to curdle.

In 1969, at least partially inspired by what his country was doing in South East Asia, George Romero made a movie that set the tone for the next decade. This was *Night of the Living Dead*, a tremendously successfully (and equally bleak) horror film that depicted a society in collapse.

That collapse is caused by the dead rising from their graves to attack the living, although Romero – far more than the hacks who tried copying him – is very much alive to the social and political dimensions of this catastrophe, and about how people under pressure react (badly, basically).

While *Night of the Living Dead* was a low-budget indie, mainstream film embraced the apocalypse and thereafter with the same enthusiasm. In *The Omega Man* (1971), a biological weapon has done its worst, leaving big Charlton Heston as the last man standing and obliging him to fight off red-eyed-vampire-thingies (that's the technical term) all by himself.

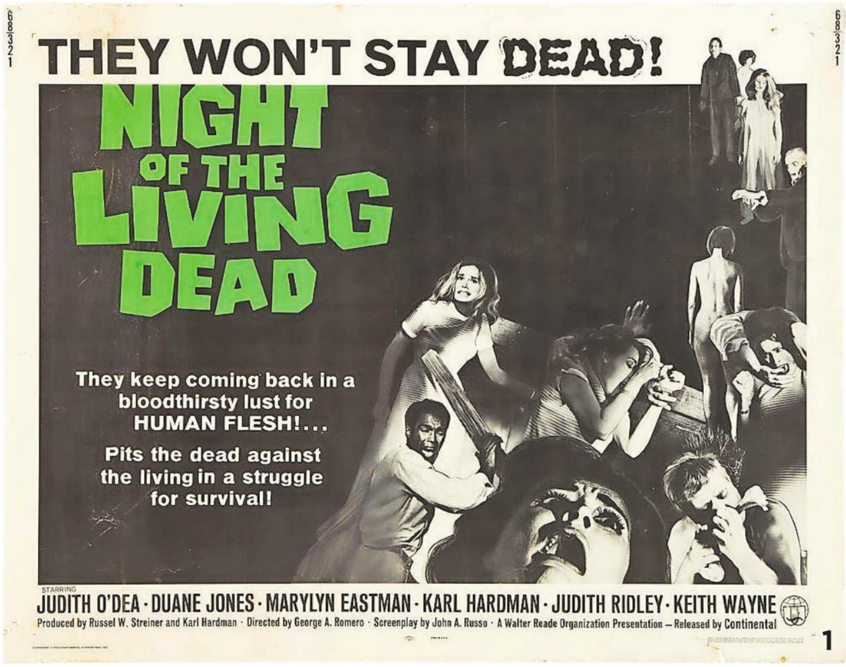
Given that it leaves most of the planet alive, *The Andromeda Strain* (also 1971) isn't as pessimistic but this story of the fight against an extraterrestrial virus reminds us how delicate society is, and how ineffectual even our best science can be, not the most cheering thought at the moment. (Even before Covid-19 and SARS, viruses were a popular way to kill off large swathes of humanity. A race memory of the Black Death, perhaps, which did exactly that.)

Whereas science fiction of earlier years looked forward to a bright, shiny future, many 1970s films followed people trying to survive after some sort of collapse. In 1970's *No Blade of Grass*, it's environmental – a virus (another one) has done a number on plant life, which doesn't leave much to eat. *A Boy and His Dog* (1975) and *Damnation Alley* (1977), meanwhile, rely on the good old fashioned nuclear destruction, torching the world and a good few of its inhabitants, leaving only isolated clusters of people.

And sometimes it's more vague: neither *The Final Programme* (1973) nor *Zardoz* (1974), both of them British, fully explain what broke the world.

Whatever the causes for the desolation, the results are seldom pretty. If civilisation hasn't actually collapsed in these films then it's looking distinctly peaky, and Enlightenment values are surplus to requirements: *Zardoz*, for instance, concludes with what remains of

▶ Turn to page 40


68/321
THEY WON'T STAY DEAD!
NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD
They keep coming back in a bloodthirsty lust for HUMAN FLESH!...
Pits the dead against the living in a struggle for survival!
STARRING
JUDITH O'DEA · DUANE JONES · MARYLYN EASTMAN · KARL HARDMAN · JUDITH RIDLEY · KEITH WAYNE
Produced by Russel W. Streiner and Karl Hardman · Directed by George A. Romero · Screenplay by John A. Russo · A Walter Reade Organization Presentation – Released by Continental
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From page 39

higher culture chopped down by barbarians.

By showing how easily it can be swept away, all these films stress the fragility of our society. This is very core of the apocalypse movie; the genre isn't so much about prediction as projection, extrapolating the terrors and the tensions of their times, which is why it tends to flourish in ages of anxiety.

In the 1970s, there were fuel shortages, financial shocks, terrorism and more: not quite end-of-the-world stuff but enough to show just how rickety our way of life is, and how little it takes to cause disruption.

And that, surely, is why the apocalypse movie flourished in the early 1980s, when Ronald Reagan ramped up the Cold War and nuclear panic was at its height. *Mad Max* (1979) is only the most famous of those: *The Quiet Earth* (1985) and *Night of the Comet* (1984) are smart survival movies set in (mostly) empty cities, while 1986's *Dead End Drive-In* might look like one of the numerous *Mad Max* rip-offs that littered video stores of the time but it's a good deal smarter and savvier than that, as though J.G. Ballard tried to make an exploitation movie.

Whether because of Reagan's sabre-rattling and/or the failings of the Soviet system, the Cold War was over by the end of the decade. The apocalypse movie wasn't though, probably because the collapse of communism meant we were aware of other things. Like climate change – *Waterworld* (1995) was an early (and not very good) response to that, set after the polar icecaps have melted (In 2008, *Wall*E* would tackle environmental issues with far more imagination and wit).

Then there were the more warnings about viral outbreaks: the one in *12 Monkeys* (1995) wipes out 98% of humanity.

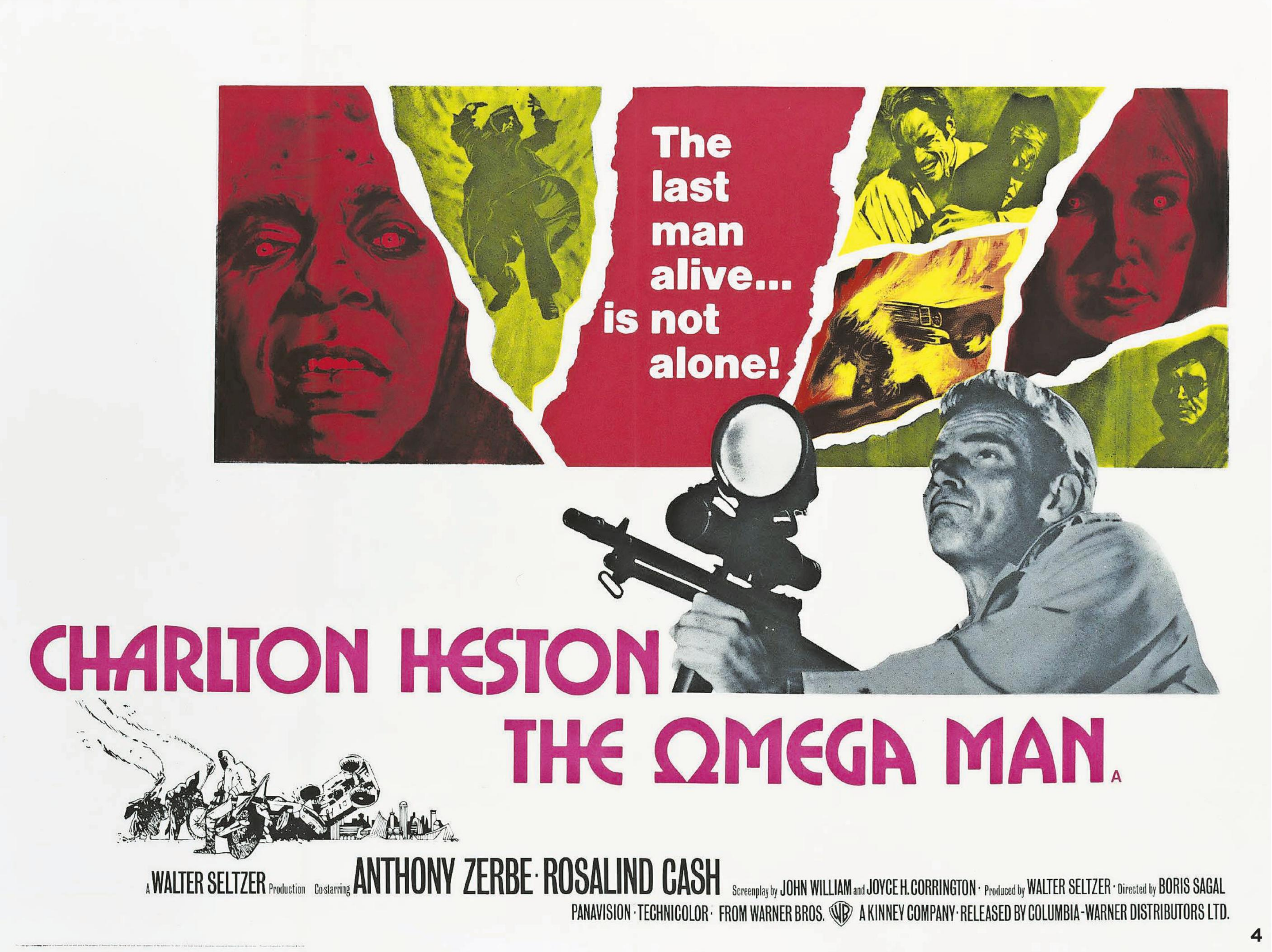
The strain in *28 Days Later* (2002) isn't that severe but does turn the infected into enraged zombies. Influenced by Romero's films, it was also informed by the fuel protests of 2000 when the petrol pumps ran dry with distressing speed, and we realised how vulnerable supply lines were.

BLEAK: **1** Poster for *Night Of The Living Dead* (1968)

2 A parade of zombies in George Romero's *Night Of The Living Dead* (1968)

3 Sean Connery, in John Boorman's *Zardoz* (1974)

Photos: Getty Images


The last man alive... is not alone!
CHARLTON HESTON
THE ΩMEGA MAN A
A WALTER SELTZER Production Co-starring ANTHONY ZERBE · ROSALIND CASH Screenplay by JOHN WILLIAM and JOYCE H. CORRINGTON · Produced by WALTER SELTZER · Directed by BORIS SAGAL
PANAVISION · TECHNICOLOR · FROM WARNER BROS. A KINNEY COMPANY · RELEASED BY COLUMBIA-WARNER DISTRIBUTORS LTD.

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Mad Max comparisons were wheeled out during those protests too but by the time *28 Days Later* was actually released we viewed them more benignly – almost nostalgically, in fact. We learnt on September 11, 2001, that there are worse things than petrol rationing.

Unsurprisingly, it's been good times for the apocalypse movie since then, from high art (2003's *Time of the Wolf*, written and directed by Michael Haneke) to low trash (*Left Behind*, from 2014 – with Nicolas Cage) and all points in between (*It Comes At Night* [2017], *Melancholia* [2011], *The Rover* [2014], *10 Cloverfield Lane* [2016]...). The best must be *Children of Men* (2006), directed by Alfonso Cauron.

Taking place after some unspecified event has rendered our entire species infertile, it's one of the few movies that shows everyday life after an apocalypse: the world grinds on and will do until everyone on it is dead, but everyone is angry, anti-immigrant sentiment is rife and there's nothing at all to look forward to. (Any resemblance to the last few years in this country is purely coincidental.)

We live in apocalyptic times. Even before the current pandemic there was no shortage of existential threats, whether climate catastrophe, the rise of AI or global populism.

Hell, not enough is being made of the actual plague of locusts gnawing its way across Africa right now.

As depressing as all this is, apocalypse movies can provide their own reassurance. They reflect the terrors of their day and, in most cases, those terrors have passed. Soon enough that will be true of our current nightmare too.

MAINSTREAM:
4 Poster for Boris Sagal's *The Omega Man* (1971) starring Charlton Heston

5 James Olson on a lobbycard for *The Andromeda Strain* (1971)

Photos: Getty Images

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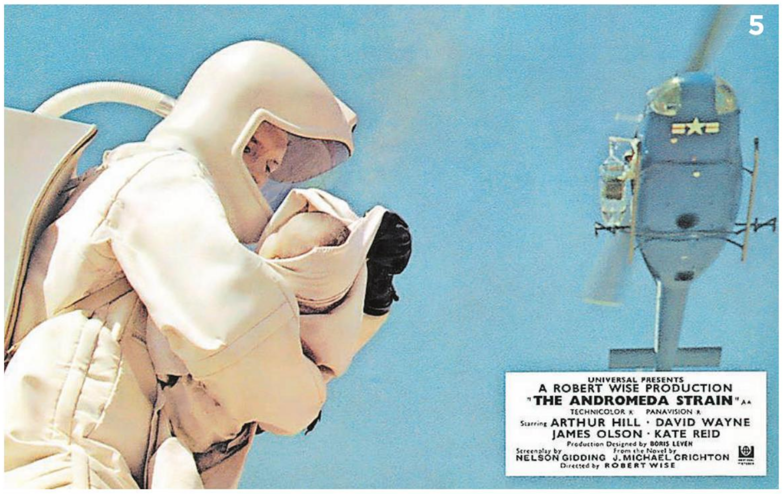

UNIVERSAL PRESENTS
A ROBERT WISE PRODUCTION
"THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN" AA
TECHNICOLOR ® PANAVISION ®
Starring ARTHUR HILL · DAVID WAYNE
JAMES OLSON · KATE REID
Production Designed by BORIS LEVEN
Screenplay by NELSON GIDDING
From the Novel by J. MICHAEL CRICHTON
Directed by ROBERT WISE

SNARED BY THE DRUM

As the world's most famous drum break turns 50, **MATT BRENNAN** explains why the selfless drummer must pay such a high price for their contribution to our common culture

James Brown released a seven-inch single called *Funky Drummer* in March, 1970 – a loosely arranged jam session showcasing the talent for improvisation of drummer Clyde Stubblefield, who was employed in Brown's band at the time.

Although it failed to crack the top 50 pop charts on release, *Funky Drummer* was rediscovered in the 1980s by a generation of pioneering hip-hop artists. These have included Kool Moe Dee, Grandmaster Flash, Eric B. & Rakim, Run DMC, LL Cool J, Public Enemy, and the Beastie Boys – who all sampled Stubblefield's infectious drum break.

The *Funky Drummer* breakbeat soon spread far beyond hip-hop, appearing on well over 1,000 recordings by pop artists ranging from George Michael and Sinead O'Connor in the 1990s right up to Emeli Sandé and Ed Sheeran in the past decade.

Funky Drummer is one of the most sampled drum breaks of all time – and also one of the most discussed (including in my new book, *Kick It: A Social History of the Drum Kit*.

It's also a prime example of how copyright law has historically failed to compensate drummers. Stubblefield famously never received any royalties from all the hits his drum break was used on.

James Brown typically paid his musicians on a 'work-for-hire' basis for recording sessions, and generally credited himself as the sole author of the resulting songs. This was the case even if the music was largely improvised, as in the case of *Funky Drummer*.

It was also in keeping with copyright law conventions at the time, which usually recognised the legal author of a musical composition as the person who wrote the topline melody and lyrics.

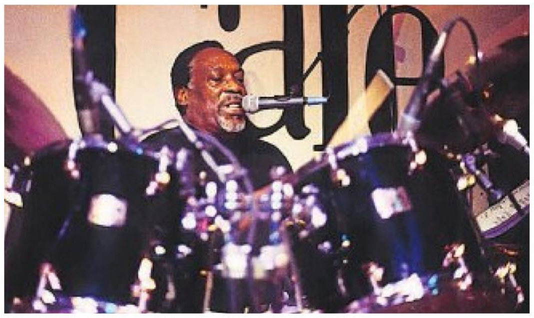
Funky Drummer has various musical elements: simple repeating horn and guitar riffs, a syncopated wandering bass line, occasional instrumental solos on organ and saxophone, as well as vocal improvisations by Brown.

We also hear Stubblefield's performance underpinning the jam session, including the glorious moment when Brown orders the band to drop out while Stubblefield keeps drumming his highly inventive groove unaccompanied – the isolated drum 'break' that hip-hop artists love to sample.

But Brown would have deemed all the above musical elements as insignificant compared to his own role as the artistic leader and frontman – this wasn't necessarily fair, but neither was it uncommon.

Ringo Starr did not receive co-writing credits for his drumming contributions on Beatles songs, for example, even though his drum parts have often been retrospectively deemed by musical peers to constitute a distinct compositional element of the band's work.

THE MOST EXPLOITED MAN IN MUSIC HISTORY?



HIGHLY-REGARDED: Clyde Stubblefield Photo: Getty Images

Clyde Stubblefield was a self-taught musician. He grew up in Chattanooga and his sense of rhythm was influenced by the industrial sounds of factories and trains that surrounded him.

He joined James Brown's band in 1965 – one of two drummers, alongside John 'Jabo' Starks.

Stubblefield's short solo on *Funky Drummer* is said to have been sampled on more than 1,000 songs. Though he saw very little in terms of royalties, he was held in high regard by fellow musicians. When he fell ill, Prince personally paid $90,000 to cover his bills. Stubblefield died in 2017, aged 73.

Five decades on, in a pop soundscape utterly transformed by hip-hop culture, we now tend to recognise just how important a compelling drum beat is in making a chart hit. Most commercially successful music in the 21st century is anchored by the sounds of the kick drum, snare and cymbals (or electronic percussion serving similar functions).

You can now point to plenty of contemporary chart hits that don't feature an electric guitar, but there are almost none that don't prominently feature a beat between kick and snare – whether acoustic, sampled or synthesised.

In the hit factories of the present day, the most successful pop artists often bring in producers who have gained reputations by creating alluring beats. They often receive a formal share in songwriting credits as 'co-writers' and 'producers'.

We also live in an era when it is increasingly expensive to gain legal permission to sample drum breaks from rights holders (usually songwriters and/or record companies, as opposed to drummers). This has led to a relatively hidden ancillary industry of 'sample replay' companies that are hired to painstakingly re-record well-known drum breaks (and other parts from guitar riffs to vocal samples).

These are designed to resemble the original recordings as much as possible.

The rights to these copycat recordings are then bought wholesale and sampled instead of the originals (at least by the handful of pop stars with deep enough pockets to afford such tactics).

One drummer making a living from sample replay is Dylan Wissing, an American session musician who has re-recorded impeccable covers of famous drum breaks for the likes of Jay-Z, Kanye West, Drake, Eminem, Rick Ross, John Legend and Alicia Keys.

Wissing also runs a website, *Getting The Sound*, which offers tutorials on how to digitally recreate famous breakbeats resulting in "a new recording of an existing audio recording that is sonically indistinguishable from the original".

Unsurprisingly, one such tutorial demonstrates how to reproduce *Funky Drummer* – "from choosing the instruments, tuning, muffling, and performance to miking the kit, treating the room and recording the drums for this iconic breakbeat masterpiece".

The sample replay industry relies on the premise that a particular performance of a work cannot in itself be subject to copyright. Yet part of the legacy of *Funky Drummer* is the discourse and debate it has generated on exactly this point: everyone seems to agree that Stubblefield was not fairly

FRONTMAN: James Brown performs on *Saturday Night Live*, 1980. Brown paid his backing musicians on a 'work-for-hire' basis so Clyde Stubblefield received no credit – or royalities – for his classic *Funky Drummer* drum break

Photo: Getty Images

remunerated for his creativity. But what would be the implications for musical culture if music copyright legislation was changed in his favour?

Drumming performances are typically considered not to be musical compositions – and this is both a good thing and a bad thing. If every element of musical creation was locked down as a form of intellectual property – from a standard blues chord progression (upon which most blues songs are constructed) to a swinging ride cymbal pattern (the underlying rhythmic pulse upon which countless jazz compositions were built from the 1940s onwards) – we might conceivably be left with no freely available musical building blocks to make new compositions.

It's a good thing that musicians can borrow, repurpose and build upon previous musical ideas without the fear of getting sued – that's how new music gets made. But *Funky Drummer* raises a crucial question: where do we draw the line between a generic part and an original musical composition? This is the tension that *Funky Drummer* brings sharply into focus, and it is at the heart of understanding how we make sense of musical creativity.

■ Matt Brennan is a reader in popular music at the University of Glasgow; this article also appears at theconversation.com

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THE CARTOONIST WHO HELPED FRANCE RETRACE HER ROOTS

PAUL SMITH explains how Asterix creator Albert Uderzo, who died last week, told the story of French identity

GALLIC GREAT: Asterix cartoonist Albert Uderzo in his Paris studio, 1983

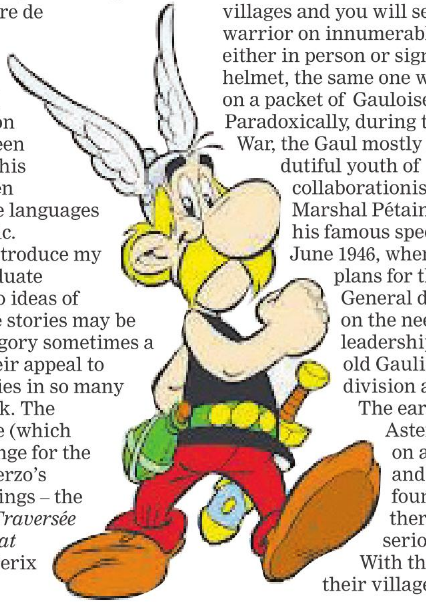
Photo: Getty Images

Albert Uderzo, half of the team that created Asterix the Gaul, has died at the age of 92. Born in north-eastern France in 1927, the son of Italian immigrants, Uderzo first emerged as a young cartoonist in 1959 when he and the writer René Goscinny produced the first serialised adventures of Asterix for the magazine *Pilote*.

The first book, *Astérix le Gaulois* (*Asterix the Gaul*) appeared in 1961. The two men produced 24 books before Goscinny died, prematurely, in 1977. *Astérix chez les Belges* (*Asterix in Belgium*, 1979) was almost complete and, not without hesitation, Uderzo finished off the work alone. Uderzo carried on, producing *Le Grand Fossé* (*The Great Divide*) in 1980, an allegorical tale (as most of the stories are) of the Berlin wall. Eight more books followed until 2009, when he finally hung up his pen after 50 years with *Astérix et le Livre d'Or* (*Asterix and Obelix's Birthday: The Golden Book*).

Since then, four more books have appeared, produced with loving care by Jean-Yves Ferri (words) and Didier Conrad (pictures). The most recent, *Astérix et la Fille de Vercingétorix* (*Asterix and the Chieftain's Daughter*), published in the autumn of 2019, has sold five million copies. Such is the place of Asterix in the French mind and cultural landscape that to mark publication a handful of Paris metro stations changed their names for the day, including Place de Clichix, Gare de Lugdunum, Menhirmontant. Asterix is not just a star in France. All told, some 380 million of the books have been sold worldwide and his adventures have been translated into more languages than any other comic.

I use Asterix to introduce my first-year undergraduate language students to ideas of French identity. The stories may be predictable, the allegory sometimes a little heavy – but their appeal to readers of all ages lies in so many aspects of their work. The subtlety of language (which was always a challenge for the translators) and Uderzo's extraordinary drawings – the page in *La Grande Traversée* (*Asterix and the Great Crossing*) where Asterix and Obelix have to explain the Gauls in signs and gestures is a masterpiece. These firm foundations were supplemented by their intelligence, deft wordplay and gentle – and not always so gentle – use of stereotypes. But the principal stereotype that underpins the whole show is that of the Gauls – that is to say the French themselves.



The country may owe its name to the Franks, but when French republicans in the late 19th century were looking to establish the 'origins' of their people, the Celtic Gauls fell easily to hand as the 'first nation'. It helped, of course, that the Gauls, as far as anyone knew, elected their chiefs and that druids met once a year in a kind of 'national assembly'. In telling the *roman de la nation* the first lesson was: 'Our ancestors the Gauls', and every schoolchild in France, including Goscinny and Uderzo, knew it.

Look around France's towns and villages and you will see the Gaulish warrior on innumerable war memorials, either in person or signalled by his helmet, the same one worn by Asterix or on a packet of Gauloises cigarettes. Paradoxically, during the Second World War, the Gaul mostly figured as the dutiful youth of the collaborationist Vichy regime of Marshal Pétain. After the war, in his famous speech at Bayeux in June 1946, where he outlined his plans for the new republic, General de Gaulle insisted on the need for strong leadership to overcome "our old Gaulish propensity for division and quarrelling".

The early success of Asterix, then, was built on an understanding and subversion of this founding myth. But there was a (sort of) serious side to it all too. With the exception of their village, all of Gaul is occupied, as France had been until 15 years before. But by 1959, France was back under the control of a general who spelt history with a capital 'H'. Asterix was also about not taking 'History' too seriously.

In the 1968 story *Le Bouclier arverne* (*The Chieftain's Shield*) we learn about Vercingetorix, the greatest Gaul of them all and leader of the revolt of 52BC against Caesar that ended in defeat and massacre at Alésia (in eastern France). Except, in the Asterix story, when veterans of that campaign are asked about Alésia, they become irate, refuse to answer and point out that, in any case, nobody knows where Alésia is. This much remains true to this day. For Alésia, read June 1940, read the defeat at Dien-Bien Phu in the Indochina War in 1954, read the retreat from Algeria. The France into which Asterix emerged was still grappling with what French historian Henri Rousso would dub "Vichy syndrome", while Algeria remains problematic to this day.

And yet, in Asterix, Obelix and their fellow villagers, we can also read a spirit of defiance ("the unyielding Gauls" perhaps, as the French president, Emmanuel Macron, referred to them in 2018). There is also a capacity, at moments of great need, to pull together, by means of some magic potion, what French rugby players nowadays call le French flair, offset by a tremendous spirit of openness and hospitality (every Asterix tale ends with a feast) and of international fraternity against oppression – the Romans, the Germans (but not the Goths), the crushing hand of the centralised state. Asterix is complicated stuff. And so is France. Vale Uderzo.

■ Paul Smith is an associate professor in French and francophone studies at the University of Nottingham; this article also appears at theconversation.com

THE CORNISH CRUCIBLE

When Barbara Hepworth and a group of fellow artists headed to St Ives to see out the Second World War they established a hub of creativity that has endured. **FLORENCE HALLETT** reports

Linear Construction in Space No.1 is both something and nothing: spun in nylon threads and perspex, it is as slight as a cobweb, the hole at its centre an absence that confers weight on the material around it. Ethereal as it is, it is peculiarly matter-of-fact, constructed from aggressively modern materials with a precision befitting its maker's scientific background.

Its aesthetic is more high tech than homespun, but Naum Gabo's sculpture was made in a remote corner of rural England, in Carbis Bay, a village on the Cornwall coast near St Ives.

Here he, and Britain's most prominent modernists, took refuge during the Second World War, linchpins of an artists' colony that would continue to be a driving force in the British avant-garde until the 1960s.

Gabo made around 16 iterations of *Linear Construction in Space No. 1*, the third of which, made around 1942-43, was acquired by the Barber Institute in Birmingham in 2017. The gallery is now sadly closed because of Covid-19, but the sculpture was the focus of an exhibition staged in collaboration with the Jerwood Collection, exploring the remarkably fertile environment in which it was made.

Gabo and his wife Miriam arrived in Carbis Bay from London in September 1939, at the suggestion of the sculptor Barbara Hepworth and her husband, the painter Ben Nicholson, who had arrived the previous month, shortly before war was declared.

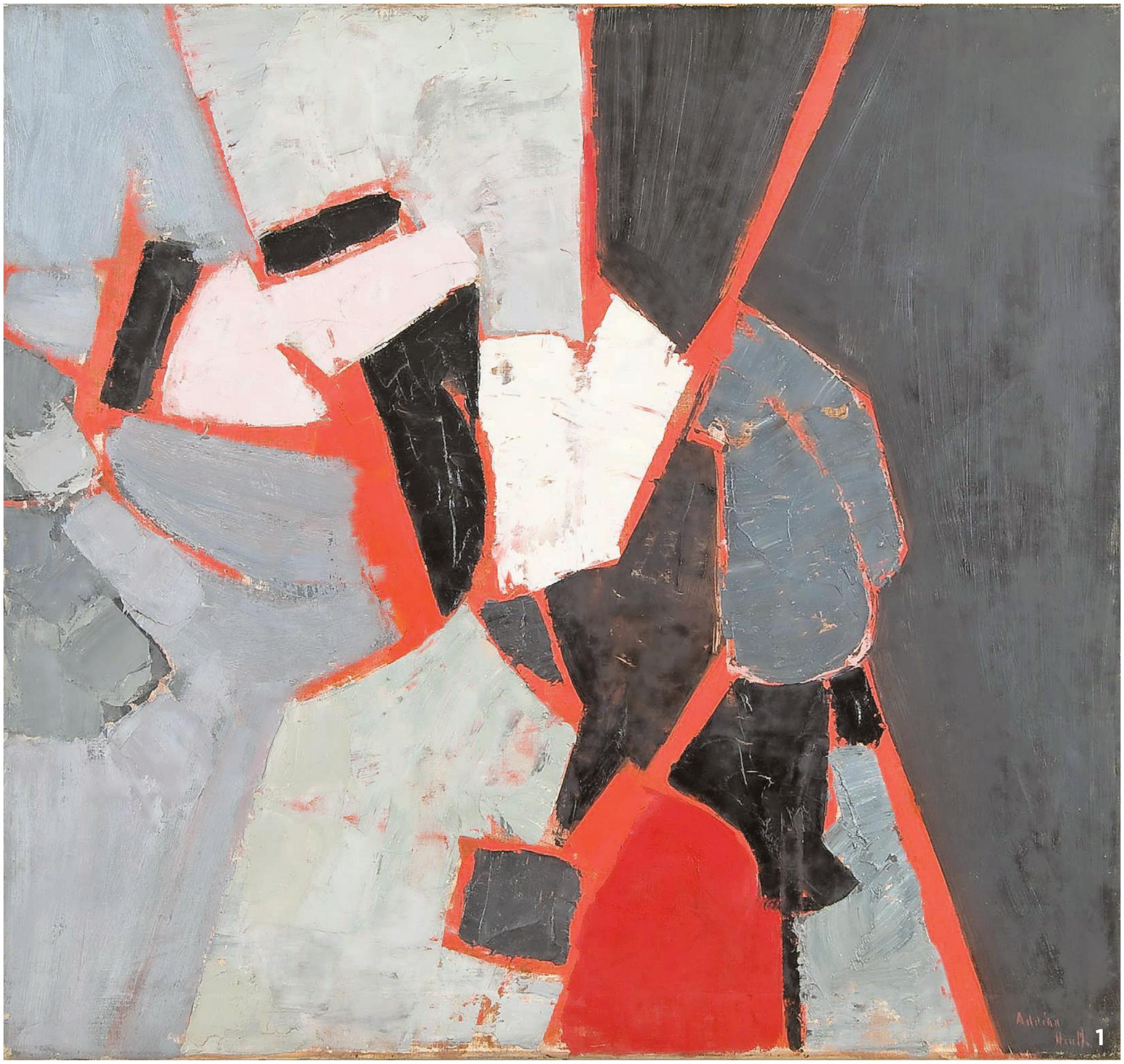
Accompanied by their five-year-old triplets and nanny, Hepworth and Nicholson had moved in with another artist couple, Margaret Mellis and Adrian Stokes, an arrangement that lasted – astonishingly – until Christmas.

As Mellis remembered years later: "Ben worked in Adrian's studio. Adrian kept his big room at the sea end of the house where he had his desk and books. Barbara worked in their bedroom where she did drawings because there was not enough room to make sculpture. The triplets and the nurse lived in my studio and I worked in our bedroom." Even after they had all moved into houses of their own, close proximity would remain a feature of St Ives life, with friendship, rivalry, inspiration and jealousy stoking the furnace of the Carbis Bay Constructivists, a brilliant group of abstract artists that formed around Hepworth, Nicholson and Gabo.

Constructivism's origins were in pre-revolutionary Russia, where in 1920, Gabo had published the *Realistic Manifesto*, which set out his aim to reconcile art with a world transformed by war, epidemic, industrialisation and widespread mechanisation.

In its rejection of colour and line as expressive tools, Constructivism stripped away the baggage of artistic tradition, aligning art with science, industry and technology and giving it a prominent social function. As the manifesto declared: "Art is called upon to accompany man everywhere where his tireless life takes place and acts: at the workbench, at the office, at work, at rest, and at leisure; work days and holidays, at home and on the road, so that the flame of life does not go out in man."

Gabo had left Moscow in 1922, to become the de facto, if self-styled figurehead of international modernism, a movement that culminated in 1937 with



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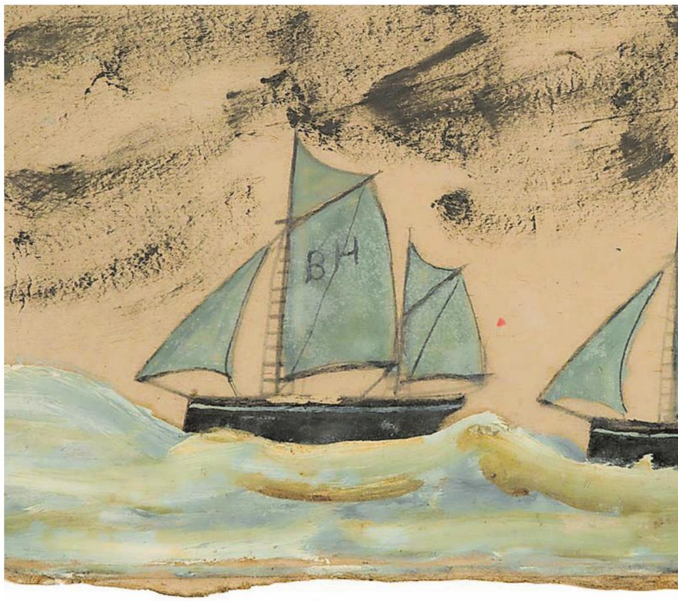

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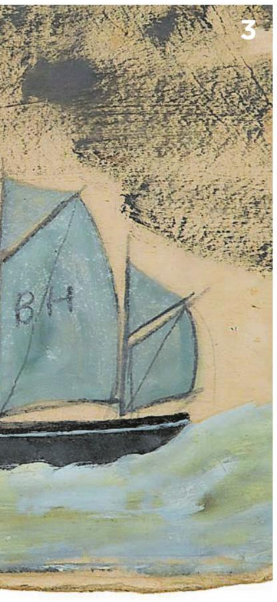
CREATIVE HUB:
1 Adrian Heath's *Composition Red, Black and Grey* (1958)

2 Barbara Hepworth in St Ives, 1964

3 Alfred Wallis, *Two Boats* (c.1930). Mariner turned painter Alfred Wallis was 'discovered' by Ben Nicholson, who admired and imitated his naïve, untutored style

4 Naum Gabo, *Linear Construction in Space No. 1* (1942-3). The Russian sculptor made around 16 versions of this design, the third of which was acquired by the Barber Institute of Fine Arts in 2017. Made from perspex and nylon filaments, the sculpture acknowledges contemporary science and technology, while taking inspiration from the Cornish landscape

Photos: Contributed/ Getty Images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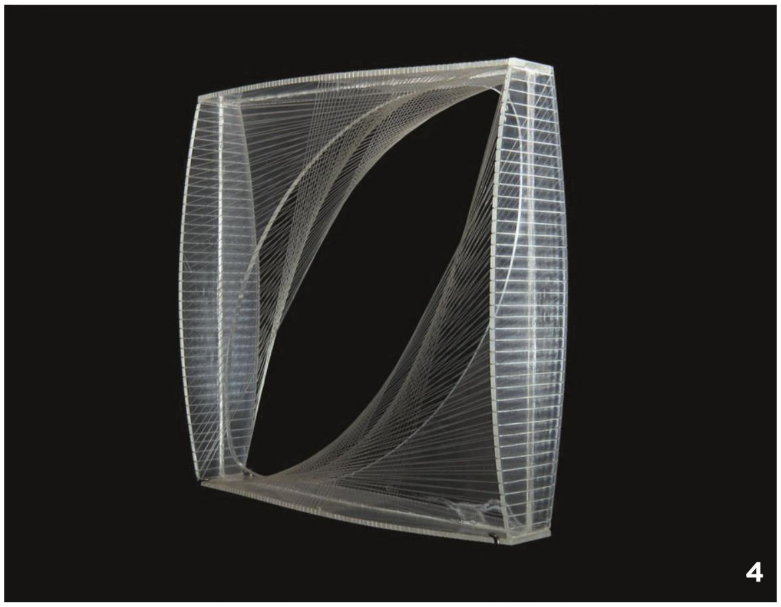
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the publication of *Circle: International Survey of Constructive Art*, which he worked on with Hepworth and Nicholson.

The austere style practised by individuals within the *Circle* group is exemplified by Ben Nicholson's white relief paintings, which in their rigorous use of geometry and rejection of colour, relate not only to Gabo's own distinctive style, but to the monochrome, geometric sculptures of Barbara Hepworth. *Circle* included essays from Naum Gabo and Piet Mondrian, whose quest for underlying, universal truth, inspired by a branch of spiritualist Christianity, chimed with Gabo's stated intention of "building our works as the universe builds".

It was a compelling sentiment for Hepworth and Nicholson too, who at this time were actively interested in Christian Science, and its doctrine of incontrovertible, universal laws.

Such ideas found voice in the language of abstraction, which flowed across borders and could be applied across the art forms, to architecture as much as to painting and sculpture. It was a utopian vision, that, writes Chris Stephens, the author of *St Ives: The Art and the Artists*, offered a model of "social and international cooperation on a plane distinct from the contingencies of the material world."

As the Second World War loomed, such ideals must have seemed increasingly remote. In their self-imposed exile in Cornwall, far from the air raids terrorising British cities, the *Circle* group's project could easily have lost momentum.

Instead, Gabo produced some of his most celebrated works in these years, even though, Margaret Mellis recalled, "he didn't seem to be doing any work, in fact he seemed to do nothing at all really except eat yoghurt and go for walks".

Though cushioned from the worst of the war, the Carbis Bay Constructivists were not completely cut off from its realities.

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From page 45

Until Russia joined the allies in June 1941, Gabo's movements were restricted and he was required to report to the police. When Plymouth was bombed in April 1941, Gabo wrote in his diary: "The glow was enormous and explosions of the bombs and the red rockets of the defending guns were all visible… I observed these hellish fireworks for a long time but I didn't wait for the end. I went to sleep trying to forget what I had seen, trying not to think or imagine what was happening to the people under those lights in that blazing and bombarded city."

According to Nicola Kalinsky, director of the Barber Institute, the experience of being slightly removed from the conflict may have been productive: "It wasn't as if they were thinking 'never mind the rest of the world' – in one sense it seems to have concentrated their minds on the idea that there they were and the world was falling apart behind them." Certainly, *Linear Construction in Space No. 1* seems to have been in part a response to developments in the war effort, which took a positive turn in 1940 with the formation of a coalition government, a step that encouraged Gabo and his colleagues to think in more optimistic terms about post-war recovery.

This surge of optimism is reflected in *Linear Construction in Space No 1*, a design originally conceived as a public sculpture for a textile factory. Helen Cobby, assistant curator at the Barber Institute, writes: "Jacquemard looms in textile mills may have provided inspiration for the string element of the sculpture… Such public sculptures were a way for Gabo to promote greater awareness of industry and encourage its reintegration in society."

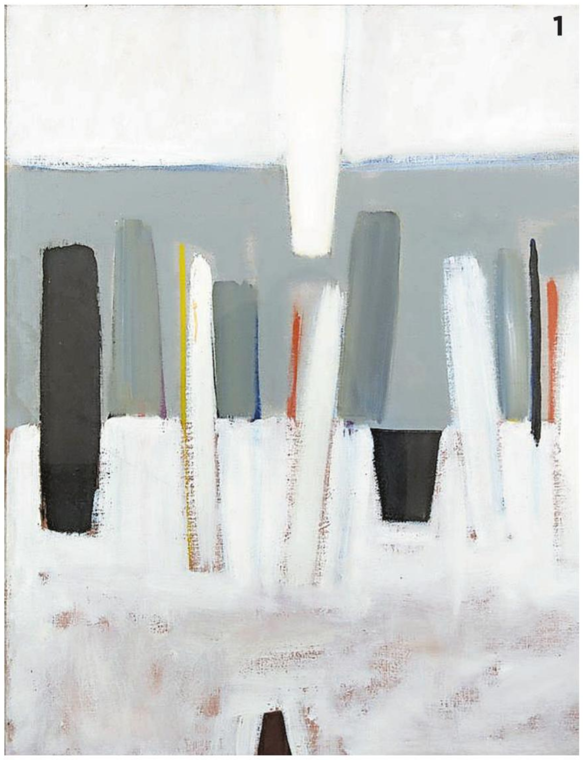
Though Constructivism had begun with an uncompromising commitment to abstract, non-representational art, Gabo was not immune to the Cornish landscape, and his long walks allowed him to assimilate natural forms in his quest for universal structure. When pressed to reveal the inspiration for his ideas, he explained: "I look and find them in the bends of the waves on the sea between the openwork of foaming crests; their apparition may be sudden, it may come and vanish in a second, but when they are over they leave me with the image of eternity's duration."

"Eternity's duration" featured in Hepworth's work too, explored often in terms of the figure in the landscape, and in references to Cornwall's ancient topography, punctuated by megaliths and henges.

Ben Nicholson's war years in Cornwall were laden with memories as much as new experiences. St Ives had been well-established as a destination for artists since the latter part of the 19th century, when rail travel made this remote but lovely part of England accessible from London.

Nicholson had first visited St Ives in 1928 with his then wife, the painter Winifred Nicholson, and his return there seems to have triggered a shift from the pure abstraction of the mid-1930s, to a more figurative style, that recalled works from the 1920s, like his linocut, *Three Mugs and a Bowl, 1928.*

The simplified style shows the influence of Alfred Wallis, a Cornish mariner turned painter whose untutored,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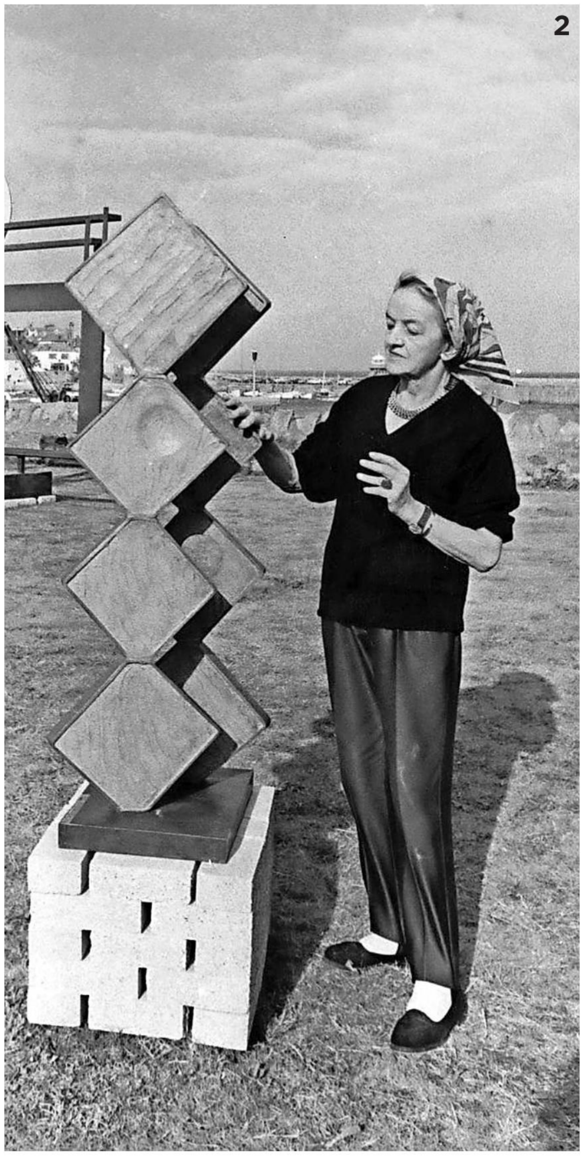
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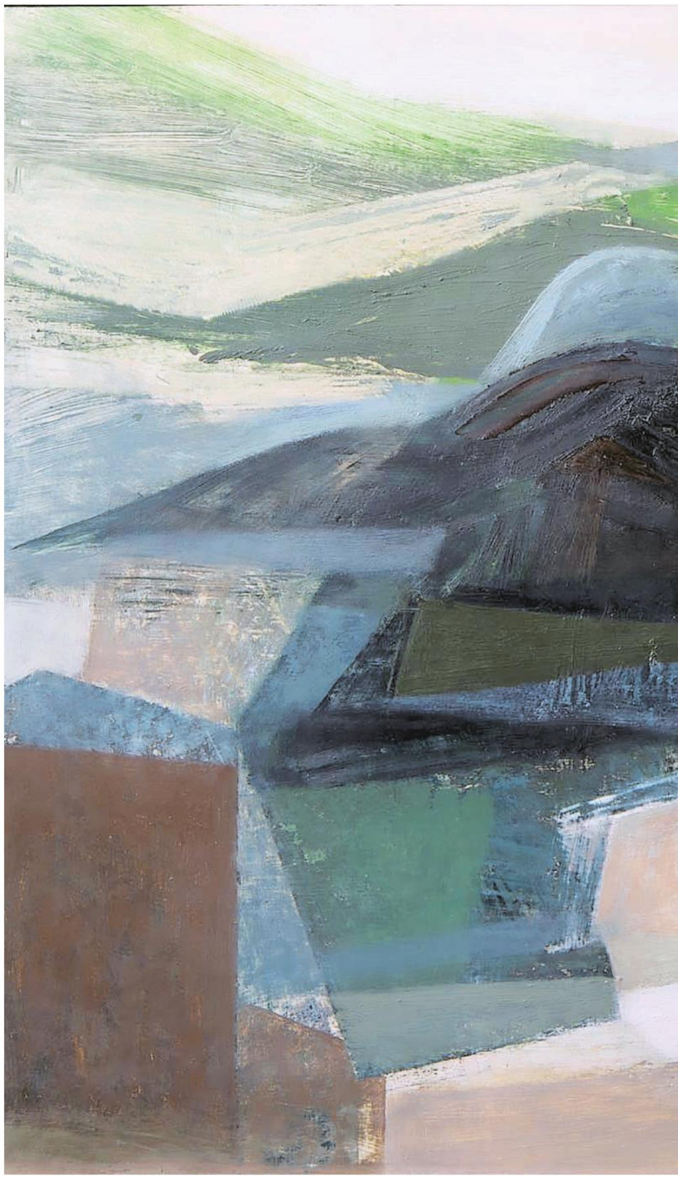

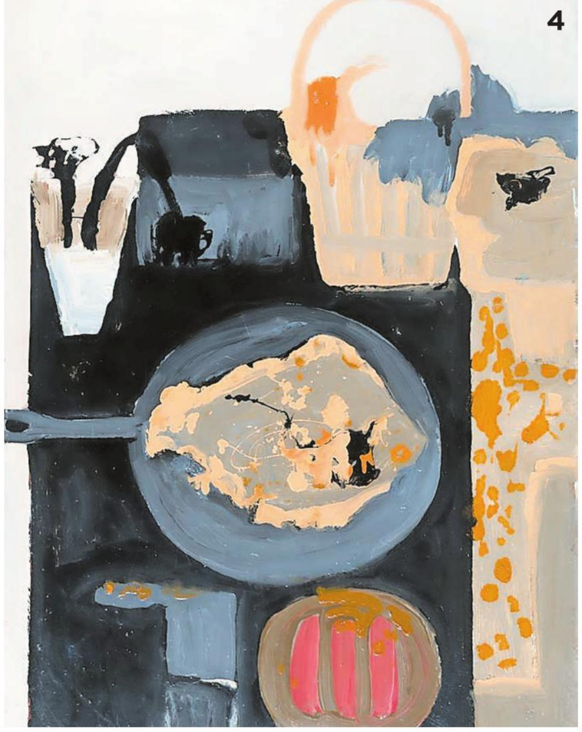
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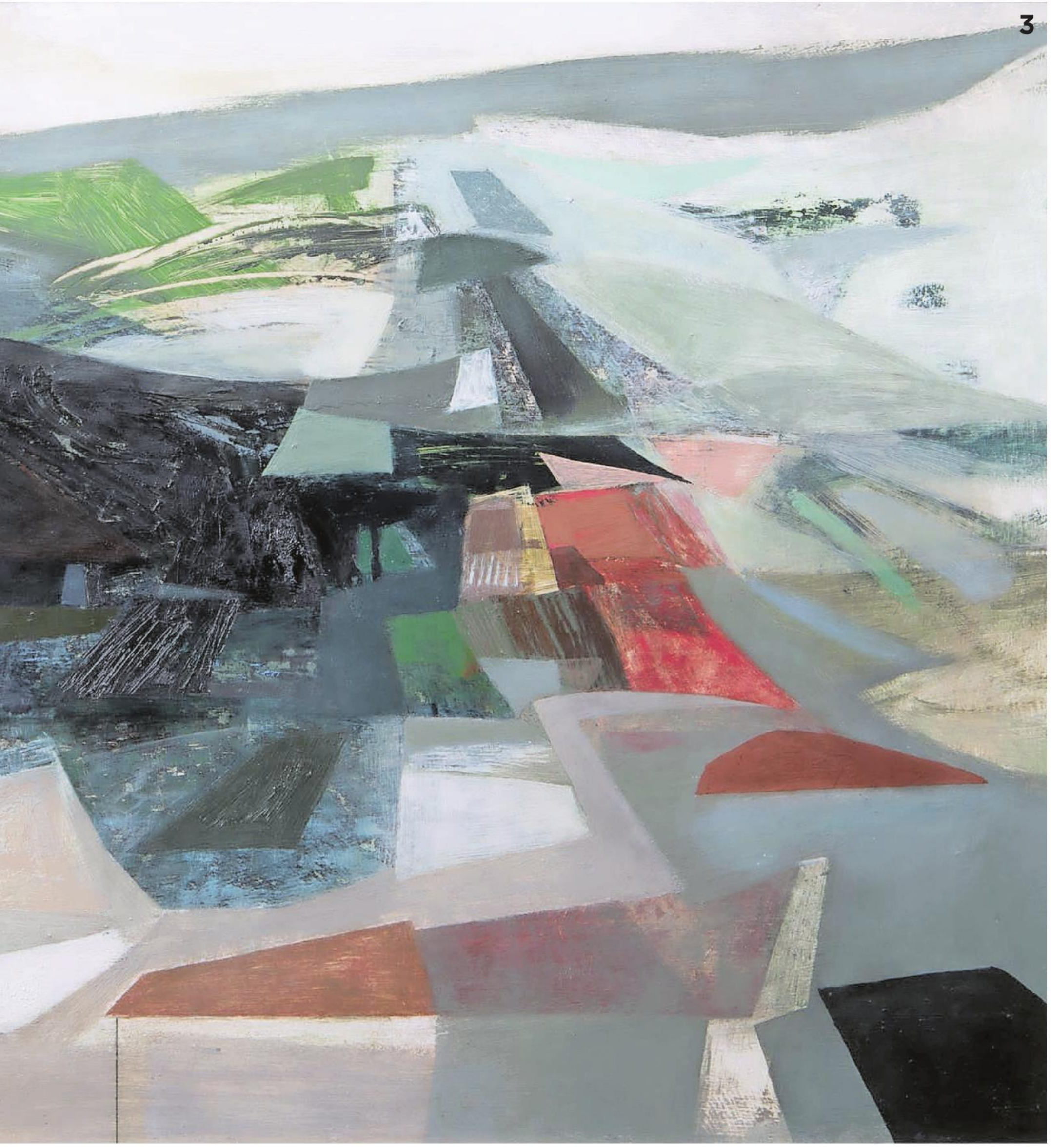
PROTEGE:
1 Terry Frost, *Grey Painting*, (1959). Frost belonged to the generation of painters after Nicholson, Gabo and Hepworth, working as Hepworth's studio assistant in 1951. He continued the tradition of abstract painting associated with St Ives, though his work was always frankly representational, inspired by his observations of the natural world

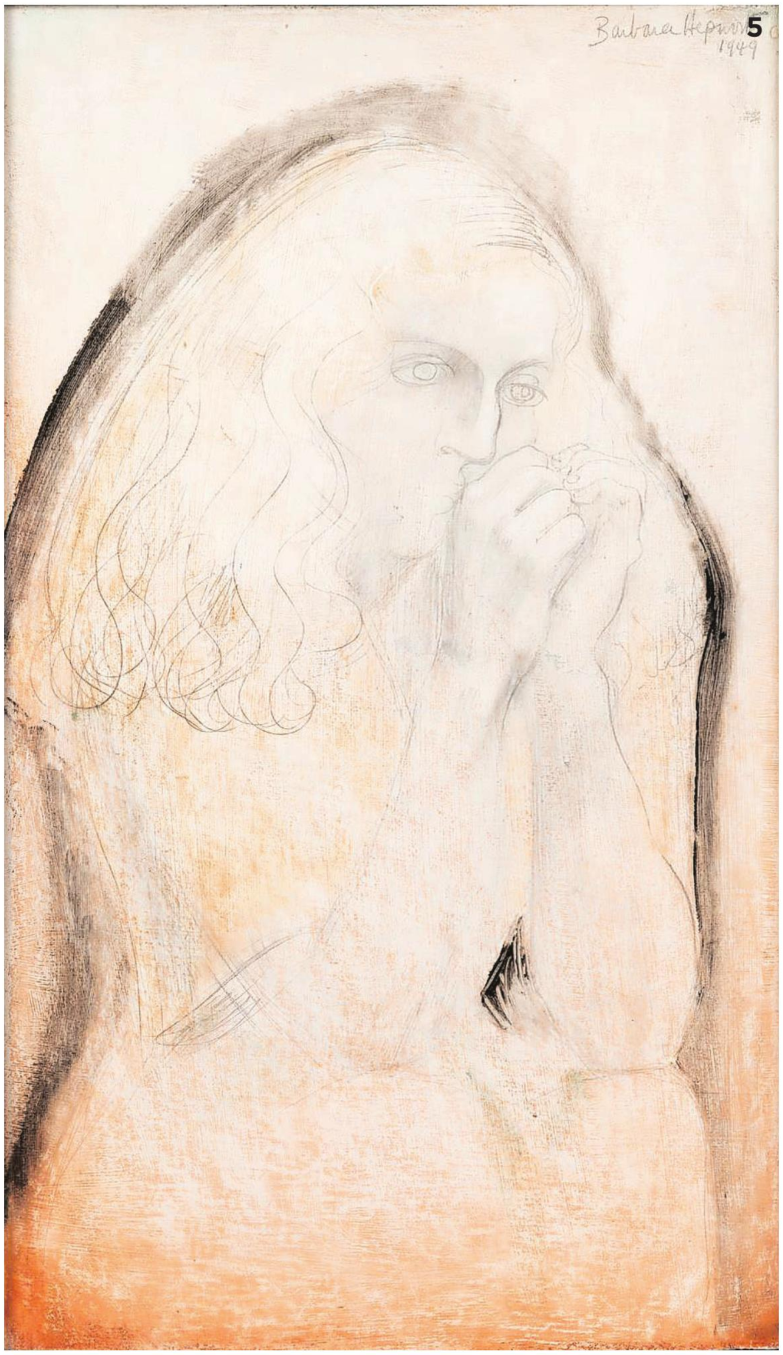
2 Barbara Hepworth with her sculpture *Square Forms (Two Sequences)* in the grounds of the parish church of St Ives in Cornwall, 1968

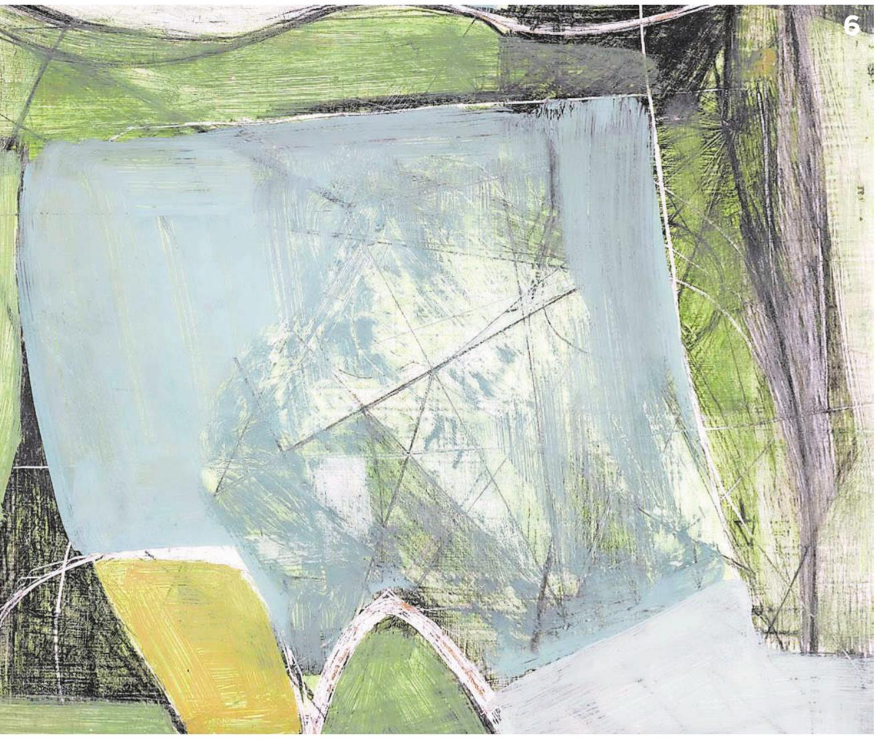
3 John Wells, *Vista* (1955)

4 Margaret Mellis, *Woman and Fish II* (1947). Mellis was a key member of the community of modernist artists in St Ives during the war years, and the pared down, rigorously geometric collages she produced at this time were influenced by Ben Nicholson. After the war she abandoned total abstraction, producing still lifes like this one, its flattened perspective still suggesting an assemblage of objects that is reminiscent of collage

Photos: Contributed/ Getty Images







INFLUENCED:
5 Barbara Hepworth, *Study for Lisa (Hands to Face)*, (1949). Hepworth and Nicholson were indebted to one another for various ideas and influences. This drawing is made on a board that had been painted and then scraped back, a technique used by Nicholson, and a few other St Ives artists

6 Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, *Winter Landscape* (1952)

Photos: Contributed

naïve style had struck a chord with Nicholson and his circle, who heralded him as a modernist hero.

As much as it fuelled ideas and inspiration, St Ives was a pressure cooker. Working and living in close quarters bred resentment and jealousy, and drunken parties often ended with fights.

Gabo and Hepworth fell out over claims of stolen ideas, while Terry Frost's description of St Ives in the 1950s borders on toxic. Frost was part of the next generation of St Ives artists, and for a time he had a studio close to both Nicholson and Francis Bacon: "You always knew when you had done a good painting because they didn't know what to say, because their envy, or jealousy, made them talk about anything but the painting."

Even so, the jealousy seems often to have been outweighed by the benefits of St Ives, which gave rise to some of the most exciting art of the 20th century. Frost's friendship with the painter Peter Lanyon introduced him to new ways of looking at the Cornish landscape, and his time as an assistant to Hepworth, who would remain in Cornwall for the rest of her life, was formative.

Lanyon was born in St Ives, and was 21 when he met Gabo, Hepworth and Nicholson in 1939. As a Cornishman, he brought a different perspective, and his drawings and paintings from the 1940s and 50s, focus on Cornwall's industrial past, in landscapes scarred by disused tin and copper mines. For Lanyon, this "richer and in fact more local vein", adhered to the principles of structural and visual purity promoted by Naum Gabo, who would remain an important influence long after his departure from Cornwall for the USA in 1946. As Lanyon explained: "Moral and aesthetic differences would lead me to break with Nicholson and Hepworth, though not with Gabo."

Bamako

A CITY IN MUSIC

A stunning musical heritage is one of the things that keeps this disparate nation together – even through the hard times. **SOPHIA DEBOICK** reports

MALI AND ITS WAILERS

MALIAN PRINCE: Salif Keita performs at New York's Apollo Theatre, 2011

Photo: WireImage

"Music is our cotton, our gold and our diamonds," says Grammy-winning Malian musician Toumani Diabaté, a key ambassador for the music of his homeland.

Landlocked and half desert, Mali boasts a musical body of work that is both deeply rooted in the ancient past and has great currency in the present. For nearly 30 years it has been the toast of world music, its blues rhythms and inimitable spirit having instant appeal.

Yet in 2012 half the country faced a complete ban on music as a rebellion of Tuareg separatists and a military coup created conditions for Islamists to seize control of the northern regions of Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal. An official decree banned all western music as "the music of Satan". Musicians were threatened and attacked. Instruments were piled on pyres and burned. For a country with such an incredibly rich musical tradition this was a deep obscenity, but while music was stifled, it couldn't be suffocated altogether.

Amid the chaos of 2012 many fled south to the capital Bamako, a polluted, seething, low-rise city on the banks of the River Niger. But the capital too was in turmoil in the wake of the coup, and the legacy of thirty years of undemocratic rule and the murderous suppression of protests during the March Revolution of 1991 still hangs heavy.

Despite the speedy recapture of the north, Islamist violence continues. In November 2015 an attack on the city's Radisson Blu Hotel saw 170 hostages taken and 20 killed by Al-Mourabitoun and Al Qaeda, and much of the country remains outside government control, while full democracy still eludes the country.

But for all this uncertainty, one thing has remained a constant. Bamako has always been the nerve centre of Malian music, a place with a djembe drum player on every street corner where Mali's myriad ethnic groups come together to cross-pollinate their musical traditions.

Here songs are sung in the tongues of the Bambara and Mandinka peoples (part of the broader majority Mande), as well as Songhai and Tuareg, the official language of French, and Bambara – the *lingua franca* across more than 40 native languages.

The tradition of the Mande *griots* – the troubadour singers of historical and praise songs – and the somewhat meditative 'desert blues' of the Mandinka and the Tuareg peoples loom large in Mali's musical exports to the West, and Malian music has been hot property for decades.

A steady stream of western musicians have gone to Bamako for inspiration and to record, Damon Albarn's collaborative album ***Mali Music*** (2002) being a notable recent example of co-option.

The story of modern Malian music begins with the Rail Band, founded in 1970 as one of many government-sponsored projects that sought to use culture as a focus for national pride.

The Rail Band were so named as they were the resident performers at the bar of the Bamako Station Hotel, the place to be seen in 1970s Bamako.

Melding electric guitar and jazz brass with African drums and traditional instruments like the lute-like kora and ngoni, the Rail Band sang Mandinka and Bambara lyrics based on a *griot* template. Featuring vocalist Salif Keita, who stood out both for his noble birth as a Malian prince and his albinism, and singer and kora player Mory Kante, the band toured across West Africa and became Mali's biggest stars.

But the Rail Band had rivals. Les Ambassadeurs were the resident band at the exclusive Motel de Bamako. A jukebox band, playing a cosmopolitan mix of styles, Les Ambassadeurs featured the famed Guinean guitarist Kanté Manfila, who joined the band in 1972.

That same year, Salif Keita defected to Les Ambassadeurs and their trajectory to becoming a more serious creative force, fusing disparate international influences into something that spoke to the Malian post-independence experience, was set.

While the Rail Band's Mory Kante would have a No.1 single across Europe in 1988 with ***Yeke Yeke***, it was Salif Keita who led the charge of Malian music breaking out on to the international stage as a critically acclaimed force. His third solo album, ***Amen***, went to No.1 on the Billboard World Music chart and earned him his first Grammy nomination in 1991.

Quickly bringing up the rear was Ali Farka Touré, his ***Talking Timbuktu*** (1994) album with Ry Cooder also topping the World Music chart and winning a Grammy. Touré was born to farming stock in the village of Niafunké in the Timbuktu region, where he later became mayor, but it was 600 miles away in Bamako, where he moved in 1970 and became an engineer for Radio Mali, that he made his first recordings as well as his last.

By the time of his death in 2006, Ali Farka Touré was considered a Malian national hero, the fact he sang in a range of the country's languages giving him broad appeal. His fusion of the traditional music of north Mali with desert blues and American soul, blues and funk would also have massive appeal

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NEW EUROPEAN: BAMAKO

Featuring:

Mansa
Rail Band

Yamore
Salif Keita

Savane
Ali Farka Touré

Laidu
Rokia Traoré

in the West, the propulsive drive of his guitar and traditional stringed instrument playing compared to John Lee Hooker's sound. It was through Radio Mali that he made the first of his albums in the 1970s, and he bookended his career with two albums recorded on the top floor of Bamako's Hotel Mandé – ***In the Heart of the Moon*** (2005) and ***Savane*** (2006).

Both the Hotel Mandé albums were recorded with Toumani Diabaté, and one of Touré's greatest contributions to Malian music was his role as a mentor to younger musicians.

Diabaté, born in 1965 and from a long line of musicians, is a player of the kora and has taken over Touré role as the face of Malian music. His music is well-rooted in the musical melting pot that is Bamako, his 2006 album ***Boulevard de l'Indépendance***, also recorded during the Hotel Mandé sessions, namechecking the thoroughfare that runs from the national museum to the river, famous for its large statue of a hippopotamus in the middle of the road.

Since the crisis in Mali began in 2012, music has been a means of processing the trauma. Samba Touré, like so many others, moved south to Bamako from his ancestral village in search of work. There he joined his first band, Farafina Lolo ('Africa Star'), and was mentored by Ali Farka Touré (no relation), as well as touring internationally as part of his band. His adaptation of the older man's playing style to the electric guitar has earned him comparisons to Hendrix.

Even before the events of 2012, Samba Touré's Songhai-language songs often called for peace and Malian unity, but 2013's LP ***Albala*** ('*Danger*') reflected on the crisis directly and was recorded as Touré's own village in Timbuktu was under occupation by radical Islamists. On the track ***Fondora*** – one full of foreboding – he directly demanded that "all killers leave our road", while 2015's ***Gandadiko*** ('*Burning Land*') analysed human failings at length once the occupation was over.

The four-piece Songhoy Blues were forged directly in the turmoil of 2012. Having fled the north, they got together in Bamako, starting out by covering the foundational songs of Ali Farka Touré. The band's debut album ***Music in Exile*** (2015) had a far more rock attitude than other notable Malian acts and was co-produced by Nick Zinner of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs.

Extensive international touring and widespread critical acclaim has followed, the band featured prominently in the 2015 documentary *They Will Have to Kill Us First*, and their funk-influenced album ***Résistance*** (2017) saw them collaborate with Iggy Pop.

Today, the music of Mali has an unassailable place on the world stage, and includes a diverse range of acts. Bamako-born husband and wife team Amadou & Mariam began performing together in the 1980s, and their joyful French-language songs like ***Beaux Dimanches***, capturing the festive atmosphere and parading of Sunday best in Bamako, are a world away from the rock influence of Songhoy Blues and the driving Tuareg desert blues of Tinariwen, who formed in Kidal in 1979 but waited 20 years before they were 'discovered' by the French recording industry at a music festival in Bamako.

Solo artists like Bassekou Kouyaté, virtuoso player of the traditional ngoni, Vieux Farka Touré, son of Ali Farka Touré, and the enchanting Bambara singer Rokia Traoré, who all moved to Bamako in their youth, add to the palette of Malian music. Traoré has been quoted as saying "Without music, Mali will cease to exist." Since Malian musicians have kept on playing, even in the face of extreme violence, there seems little danger of that.

SONGS ON THE SAND

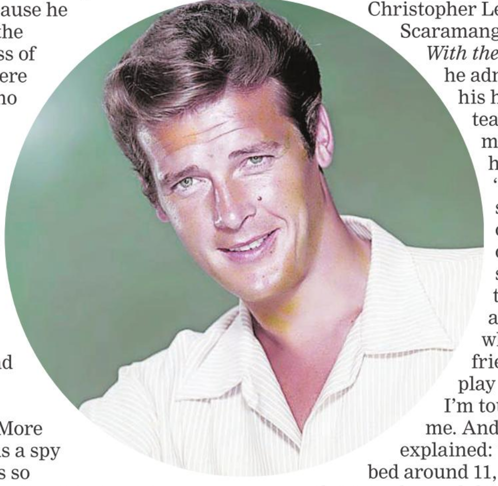
For over a decade, the Festival au Désert was a key annual event for the core of Malian musicians in Bamako. The inaugural festival took place in Kidal, but it later moved to Timbuktu, and the 2012 event was the last to date as security concerns have led to repeated postponements. An album of recordings from the 2012 Festival stands to show exactly what we are missing, but the touring Cultural Caravan for Peace project has sought to plug the gap.

STAR TURNS
BY TIM WALKER

A LICENCE TO BE KIND

The director Stephen Unwin has a question he puts to people who want to work for him on his productions. "Don't you just love stars?" he'll say, smiling broadly. All too often, they assume he's after a heartfelt "yes", but seldom, if ever, does it land the job. This is because Unwin doesn't like it when people tell him what they think he wants to hear. More to the point, he knows that stars, in common with every other demographic, divide into two categories: the loveable and unloveable.

With no more shows to review, I've decided to review the stars I've met over the years – and demonstrate, in the process, how right Unwin is, and, of course, what an appalling old name-dropper I can be. Let's begin with Sir Roger Moore. Unfashionably, I've always considered him to be the greatest James Bond because he communicated the preposterousness of the character. Here was someone who could fly a jet plane, operate a space shuttle, a mini-submarine and ski down black runs – straight off cliffs, when he'd show off his skills as a parachutist – and all without turning a well-lacquered hair. More than that, he was a spy whose cover was so comprehensively blown that every man and his dog even knew how he liked his martinis prepared.



KINDNESS: James Bond star Roger Moore, 1958

Photo: Getty Images

That Moore played Bond for laughs encouraged the general perception he was a lightweight. I'd always assumed a bit of a prima donna, too, so when I was delayed for more than an hour en route to interview him – a road closure following an accident – I imagined he'd have stormed off after an almighty hissy fit.

He was staying at a hotel in Cambridge, where he was appearing in a one-man show in which he reminisced about his life. Gareth Owen, his right-hand man, was waiting in reception. "Well, I blew that," I said. "I'm sorry." Owen told me to take a few deep breaths and led me to an all but deserted restaurant where, to my astonishment, Moore was still sitting with his wife Kristina Tholstrup.

They'd extended their breakfast for at least two hours on my account. I began apologising again. "I gather you're doing this interview for one of Lord Rothermere's rags," he replied, laconically. "So it isn't really something any of us need get terribly worried about, is it?" Moore was then 88 – he'd just over a year to live – and had shed most of his hair as a result of drugs he'd been prescribed for a succession of illnesses. It was a hot summer's day and he joked he'd had to take his wig off as he'd got too hot. Of course he never wore a wig, and, so far from fretting about his looks, he clearly saw how absurd a thing vanity was.

I found him a refreshingly honest man. He hung around a lot with Sir Michael Caine, but he told me he couldn't get over how seriously his fellow actor took himself. "Michael's never got that it's all about luck. Any one of a million guys with looks and an ability to remember a few lines could have got where he has if they'd been in the right place at the right time." As for the wig-wearing Sir Christopher Lee – Scaramanga in *The Man With the Golden Gun* – he admitted one of his hobbies was teasing his other mate known for his pomposity. "Christopher sent me a CD of him singing opera," he said. "I thanked him and said whenever I had friends round I'd play it. 'Oh, Roger, I'm touched,' he told me. And then I explained: 'I like to get to bed around 11, and, when they stay beyond that point, it's the best possible way to make them disperse."

The interview wasn't just about Sir Roger – he'd often defer to Kristina – and ultimately all that really mattered to him was that I plugged UNICEF for which he worked tirelessly as an ambassador. "What honestly is the point of fame unless you put it to some worthwhile use?" he said. "That organisation has given me the most rewarding role I ever had."

His role for the children's charity meant he couldn't be political, but anyone who followed him on Twitter during the EU referendum was left in no doubt that this outward-looking man didn't share Caine's passion for Brexit. When, almost exactly three years ago, I heard Moore had died, I admit I shed a few tears for a man who'd turned out to be so unexpectedly funny and forgiving. Kindness is what you remember long after you've forgotten all about the stardom.

LONELY BUT UNBOWED

The nation's enforced lockdown represents normal working conditions for many writers, who crave solitude. **CHARLIE CONNELLY** reports

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

It was on April 15, 1802, that William Wordsworth, out walking near Glencoyne Bay on Ullswater with his sister Dorothy, came across an explosion of daffodils so astounding he went on to produce one of the nation's favourite poems about it, known by its opening line *I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*.

The image stayed with him so vividly that when he finally sat down to describe the experience it was still perfect in his recollection two years later, prompting one of the most memorable images of nature in English literature. The poem's opening lines are so familiar you can stop just about anyone in the street and there's a good chance they'll be able to recite the first couplet.

But it's the last stanza, quoted above, that I've been thinking about recently and not just because it's 250 years this week since William Wordsworth was born, on April 7, 1770.

These are remarkable times, from the latest instance of how when the going gets tough capitalism proves about as handy as Charles Hawtrey in a pub brawl, to how the best thing we can do for our country right now is lie prostrate on the sofa watching box sets while balancing a cup of tea and an egg sandwich on our stomach.

This patriotic indolence means that a significant section of the population is, in the manner of the bard of Grasmere, now lying on the couch in vacant or pensive mood in the bliss of solitude.

Granted, we're more likely to be watching *Curb Your Enthusiasm* than Wordsworth was; he didn't have squawking small children bouncing off the walls around him the whole time he was trying to think about daffodils; and a couple of inheritances meant he didn't have to worry about losing work; but a paradoxical form of collective isolation is still the current national norm on the poet's 250th birthday.

Like Wordsworth we're also noticing the natural world around us a little more too. There aren't as many vehicles on the road and the corresponding drop in traffic noise makes it easier to hear birdsong, for example. Being restricted to going outside just once a day makes us more likely to notice things around us, especially now it's spring and the natural world is bursting into life. Daffodils, for example.

Like most writers, I imagine, if I've learned anything from these early days of coronageddon it's that my everyday existence appears to have been in inadvertent lockdown for years.

Self-isolation, quarantine, call it what you will, for us freelancers who toil over the keyboard typing for our daily bread this is essentially how we normally live.

While living through some of the strangest times any of us will experience, my diurnal round is exactly the same as it ever was, lying awake half the night worrying, getting up, making tea, parking at my desk in the corner of the spare room, firing up the PC and typing until it's time to stop (once I've read everything on Twitter, the football message boards and *The New European* website and compiled yet another 'chilled stuff to work to' playlist, of course). Then it's off to bed to start the worrying all over again.

So far, other than our local Sainsbury's being stripped of eggs a couple of times – someone round our way is clearly seeing out the crisis chomping through an omelette the diameter of the Jodrell Bank telescope – things haven't been all that different to the way they normally are.

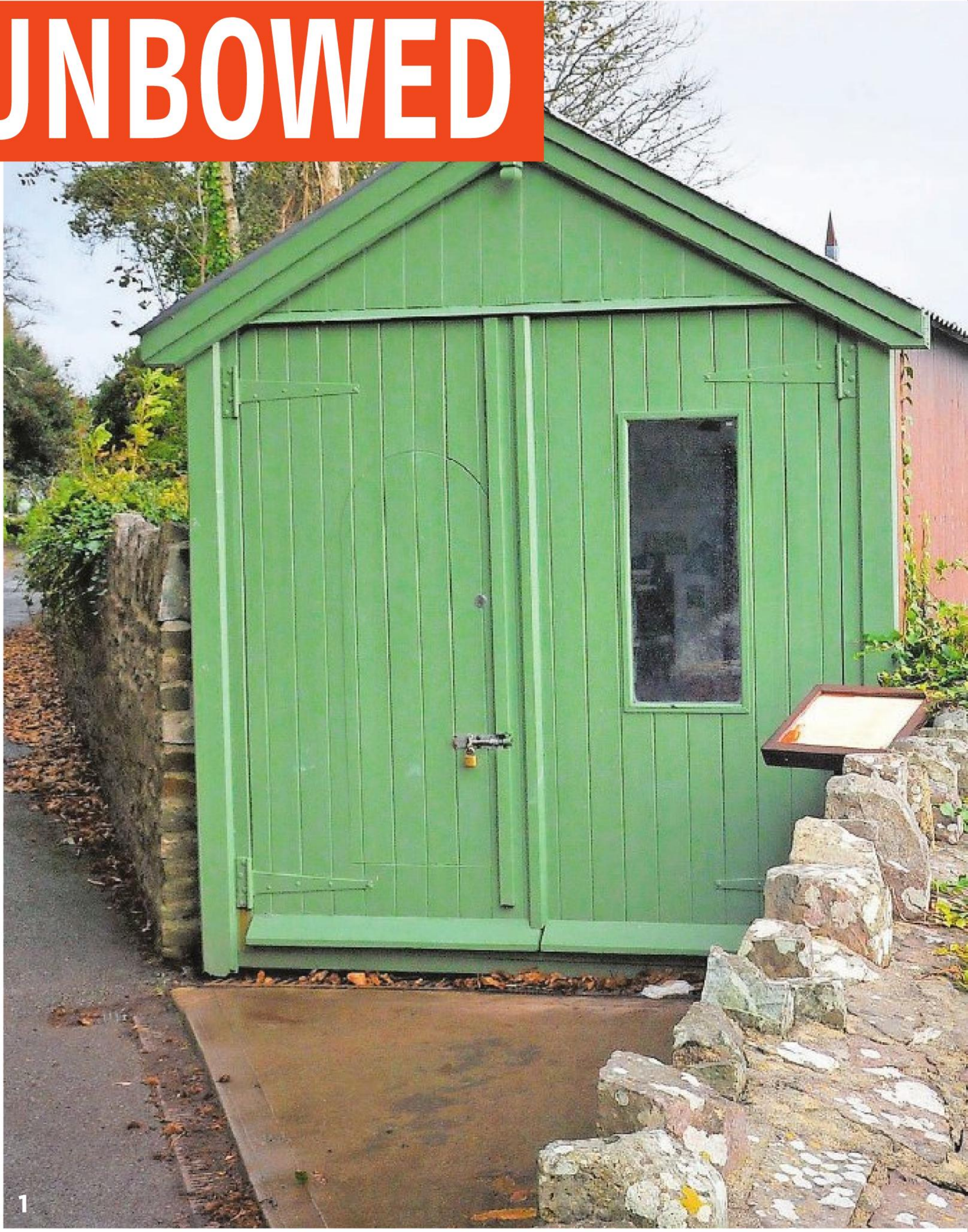
Deliberate solitude and contemplation in aid of creative effort is a relatively recent development, one that didn't get into its stride until the Romantics with Wordsworth himself one of its earliest and most enthusiastic proponents.

There aren't many upsides to a nasty, contagious virus sweeping the nation but a national lockdown feels appropriately Wordsworthian on his 250th birthday somehow (albeit Wordsworth was a committed long-distance wanderer and someone who even wrote while walking around his garden).

Writing is a contradictory activity. In order to communicate with as many people as possible for as long as possible the writer has to spend huge swathes of time alone. Some of the greats were fortunate enough to have a specific place they could go to isolate themselves: Roald Dahl had a writing hut at the end of his garden while Virginia Woolf, Edward Thomas and Mark Twain also had little retreats within easy reach of home.

George Orwell decamped to a remote cottage on the island of Jura in the Inner Hebrides in order to help focus his mind on his writing and in the last 15 years of her life Emily Dickinson went into almost total seclusion at her home in Amherst, Massachusetts, even greeting visitors from the other side of a closed door.

Perhaps most famously of all Henry David Thoreau retreated to a simple cabin by Walden Pond, also in Massachusetts, and for three years contemplated his surroundings and his internal self, rejecting modern society and convenience entirely except for going to his mother's house for dinner every night, often with a bag of laundry slung over his shoulder.



In the small, out-of-the-way town of Laugharne on the coast of Carmarthenshire Dylan Thomas lived in a house hunkered beneath a cliff on the estuary, hidden even from the footpath that passed above it. In addition he had the use of an old garage jutting out over the shore that he converted into a writing hut with windows facing out from the "heron-priested shore" across the expanse of shallow water to the horizon, a place where he could write uninterrupted with his back to the world. The garage is still there. You can visit and peer through a window to an interior reconstructed to look as if the writer of *Under Milk Wood* has just popped out for a moment – to the front bar of Brown's Hotel, most likely – and left his chair askew, bottles, pens and paper on the table, screwed up balls of rejected verse littering the floor.

Ingmar Bergman, meanwhile, retreated to the island of Faro, off the coast of Sweden in the Baltic Sea, where he could live simply and frugally, away from all distraction.

"Here, in my solitude, I have the feeling that I contain too much humanity," he wrote in his memoir *Images*, "It oozes out of me like a broken tube of toothpaste; it doesn't want to stay within the confines of my body."

Most people now forcibly at home, whether working or not, are currently feeling exactly the same thing, but about snacks.

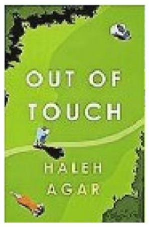
While not all writers have the resources for a dedicated outbuilding, or even a dedicated room in our homes, solitude is crucial. It's harder to achieve than ever thanks to high-speed broadband making every piece of information in the world instantly accessible, not to mention the idle conjecture, crackpot theorising and tinfoil hat hot takes (not just mine either, other people's as well).

FIVE GREAT BOOKS OUT THIS WEEK

With bookshops across the land closed for the foreseeable this is a tricky time for authors bringing out new books. Here are five notable titles published this week, available from online retailers.

OUT OF TOUCH

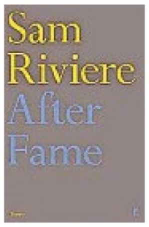
Haleh Agar (Orion, £14.99)



Ava and Michael's estranged father is dying and wants to see them. Ava receives the letter in hospital after being knocked down by a car, Michael in his New York apartment. Can the siblings forgive him and face each other after so many years apart? Will new unexpected friends offer the advice and comfort they need? Told with sensitivity and a sharp wit, Agar's debut novel is a story about love and vulnerability, sex and power, and the complicated yet unbreakable bonds of family.

AFTER FAME: THE EPIGRAMS OF MARTIAL

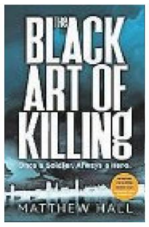
Sam Riviere (Faber, £10.99)



"An ambitious and resonant engagement with the epigrams of the Roman poet Martial," says the blurb about Riviere's much anticipated third collection. Martial first used the word 'plagiarism' in its modern sense of literary light-fingeredness and Riviere explores that notion in this inventive set of 118 poems. Themes include work, friendship, public life and sexual mores in what is expected to be one of the highest profile poetry titles of the year.

THE BLACK ART OF KILLING

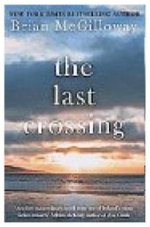
Michael Hall (Michael Joseph, £14.99)



A rising academic star, Dr Leo Black is one of Oxford's most exciting tutors whose lectures fill the theatres. Twenty years ago he was in the SAS, and when an old comrade is killed in Paris he finds his old life rearing up and threatening to pull him back in. Their former commanding officer reveals that this was more than a standalone tragedy and Leo agrees to help, causing his two worlds to collide in a way that ensures nothing will be the same again.

THE LAST CROSSING

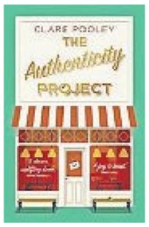
Brian McGilloway (Dome Press, £16.99).



Tony, Hugh and Karen thought they'd seen the last of each other three decades ago. When circumstances bring them together again on a ferry between Northern Ireland and Scotland on a mission to lay a few ghosts lingering from the Troubles, the past is brought in to sharp focus. Memories prove unreliable and the truth becomes slippery and ill-defined, turning this into a reunion with a legacy to confront.

THE AUTHENTICITY PROJECT

Clare Pooley (Bantam, £12.99)



Dogged by debilitating long-term loneliness Julian Jessop commences The Authenticity Project, a green notebook in which he records the truth about his life. When he leaves it on a table in his local café Monica, the owner, finds it, tracks him down and is inspired to note down nuggets of her own life within its pages. Pooley, the daughter of a former director general of the European Commission, is also the author of *The Sober Diaries* about her first year without alcohol, and her first novel promises to be the kind of uplifting tale we all need right now.

Jonathan Franzen not only removes anything capable of connecting to the internet from his laptop he even sets about destroying the sockets with a chisel in case he should fall to temptation. Alas, he still somehow manages to zap his manuscripts over to his publisher.

Are we, even those of us doing it for an alleged living, ever truly in solitude, even now, confined as we are to the four walls of wherever we call home? All the information, opinion and data in the world is swirling around us in the ether to be made visible by conjuring a quarter sphere of layered arcs at the edge of our screens. We can summon friends and family in an instant thanks to our phones and even have the choice of doing that by text, voice or video.

Distraction is the enemy of productivity and the ally of self-doubt yet distraction is what we do. To call our current situation solitude or isolation isn't quite true. To completely isolate ourselves would be irresponsible now in the extreme, for a start. It's essential we're connected for the latest news and developments, now more than ever, and the people announcing that they're going to use this time to seal themselves off and write that novel or screenplay or whatever will soon be disappointed. It can't be done. Not in these circumstances, certainly.

Edward Gibbon, author of the classic *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* once wrote, "conversation enriches the understanding, but solitude is the school of genius". Having worked in solitude for two decades, one glance at my books disproves this theory in an instant. But even aside from that, Gibbon was coming from a place of privilege, a life where it was possible to isolate oneself and, in his case, mentally relocate to the Roman Empire without pressure or disturbance.

Wordsworth was in a similar position. He was never rich as such but had enough independent means to be able to indulge his passions and his quest for the wisdom of solitude almost entirely without the inconvenience of responsibility.

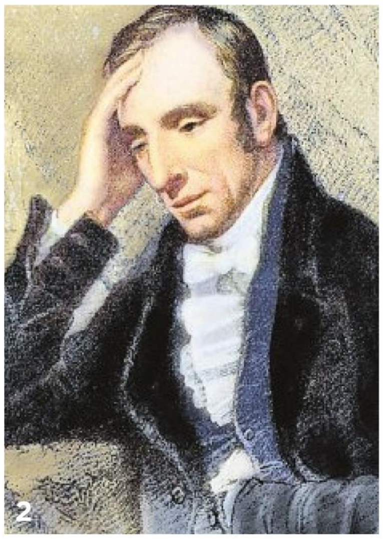
"When from our better selves we have too long/Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,/Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,/How gracious, how benign, is Solitude," he wrote in *The Prelude*.

That's the way to look at the current situation. Those who now find themselves with excess time on their hands – and it certainly isn't everyone as parents of small children are keen to point out – shouldn't feel pressure to produce something, to write that work of genius. It's an opportunity to take stock, to reflect, to go out once a day for a constitutional and look at the sky, listen to the birds and maybe even gain a new appreciation of a host of golden daffodils.

ISOLATION:
1 The writing shed of poet Dylan Thomas in Laugharne, Wales

2 English romantic poet William Wordsworth

Photos: Getty Images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EUROFILE POEM AND PUZZLES

a poem for europe

BENEDICT GILBERT is originally from Norwich and works as a sixth form teacher in south-east London. He is working on poems towards a first collection.

HURRICANE SEASON,
After Derek Walcott (1930-2017)

"The classics can console. But not enough."

In time, our eyes come around
To this canvas –

A young novice,
Turned old master.

Giving his utmost –
Pushing out into sea-green light.

*

A dark hemisphere clings
At the ribs of the boat,

Holds the season's turning.

*

When the hurricanes come
You just have to wait –

What is ours *lashed to these islands*
Like hope.

Of all people,
We are not above such things.

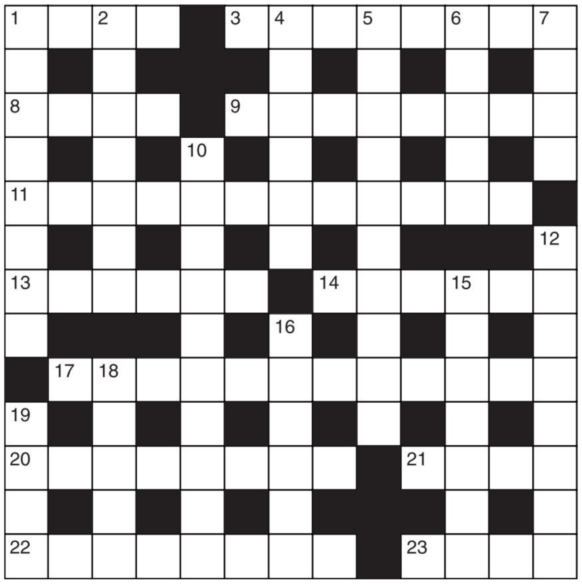
A poem for Europe is edited by Briony Bax, Poetry Editor.
Submit your poems to poetryeditor@theneweuropean.co.uk

Cryptic crosswords sponsored by DORMONT ESTATE LIVING IN BALANCE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT www.dormontestate.com

Cryptic 1

Across
1. Sounds like what we did to the way in the fog! (4)
3. Sink into mere peat, perhaps (8)
8. Sad evidence of a ripping time? (4)
9. Torn volume in which tenant's payments are recorded (4,4)
11. Test impressions of telling evidence from the kitchen (6,6)
13. In the direction of hospital patients? (6)
14. The cartel shows its true colour (6)
17. An undecided matter to begin the enquiry with (4,8)
20. Start something at the place where I dined (8)
21. Father is in an Italian city (4)
22. Making corrections puts me back at the finish (8)
23. Five hundred years old? That's very old! (4)

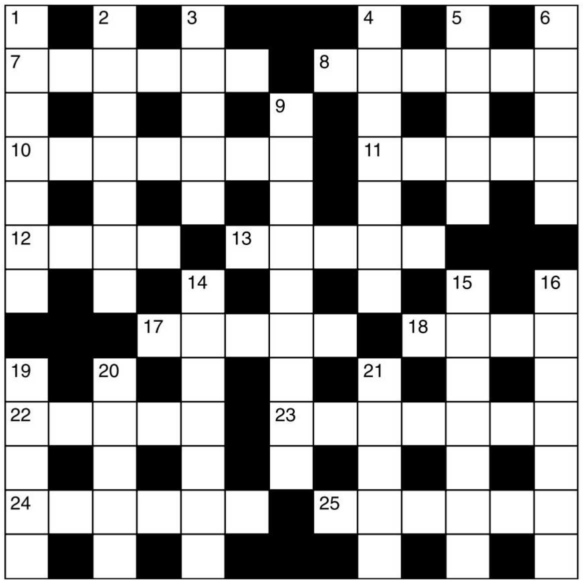
Down
1. I'm to take it all back to the entrance to ease things (8)
2. Bird takes a gulp (7)
4. Free expert taking me in without hesitation (6)
5. At a standstill because of absence of proposals (10)
6. An idiot standing on his head at a distance (5)
7. The links lack thin animals (4)
10. Don't forget the wild animal you thought about! (4,2,4)
12. Dad rants in some measure! (8)
15. Vituperation from a fence? (7)
16. This fastener on the other hand carries great weight (6)
18. The attitude I am in shows balance (5)
19. Conceal skin (4)



Cryptic 2

Across
7. A motive to set forth logically (6)
8. Very small secretarial note (6)
10. No longer hold a clique without charge (3,4)
11 & 18 Across. A charming staff set up in North America (5,4)
12 Across & 14 Down. But they're not speechless hotel servants! (4,7)
13. Slight prevarication about material texture (5)
17. Dear Thomas, make the circuit safe inside (5)
18. See 11 Across.
22. Plan to engross one aviation expert (5)
23. Passes on information when representative has a meal (7)
24. Distinctive dress for this kind of stable (6)
25 Across & 4 Down. Not necessarily a sentimental film (6,7)

Down
1. Before the team take control at the meeting (7)
2. I'm surrounded by dough – it's a hobby! (7)
3. To collect treasure is difficult if you have nothing inside (5)
4. See 25 Across.
5. A collection of pieces sounding melodious (5)
6. Appears to be a diocese manuscript (5)
9. Records showing people's voice ranges (9)
14. See 12 Across.
15. Live with the commanding officer – just routine (7)
16. Communication causes a mix-up a long time after (7)
19. This provides enchantment for a certain length of time (5)
20. The girl will produce a fruit tree (5)
21. Rings up for a film (5)

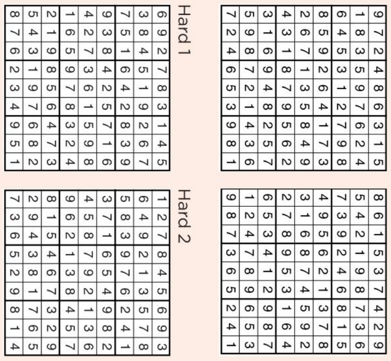


Crossword solutions

Cryptic 1
Across: 1 Mist; 3 Permeate; 8 Tear; 9 Rent book; 11 Galley proofs; 13 Toward; 14 Claret; 17 Open question; 20 Initiate; 21 Pisa; 22 Emending; 23 Aged. **Down:** 1 Mitigate; 2 Swallow; 4 Exempt; 5 Motionless; 6 Aloof; 7 Elks; 10 Bear in mind; 12 Standard; 15 Railing; 16 Button; 18 Poise; 19 Hide.

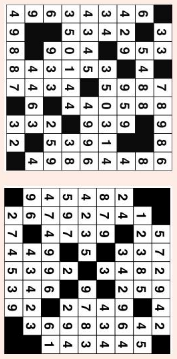
Cryptic 2
Across: 7 Reason; 8 Minute; 10 Set free; 11 Totem; 12 Dumb; 13 Fibre; 17 Earth; 18 Pole; 22 Pilot; 23 Repeats; 24 Livery; 25 Moving. **Down:** 1 Preside; 2 Pastime; 3 Hoard; 4 Picture; 5 Suite; 6 Seems; 9 Registers; 14 Waiters; 15 Cohabit; 16 Message; 19 Spell; 20 Olive; 21 Spool.

Sudoku solutions



Medium 1
Medium 2
Hard 1
Hard 2

Numberfit solutions



AMBIT

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Sudoku — medium 1

	7		4		6			
1		3				6		
	4		3		2		9	
8		9		6		1		3
			1		5			
4		1		7		5		2
	1		9		8		5	
		8				4		6
			6		3		8	

Sudoku — medium 2

	6				7		2	9
5		2		9				6
	3			4	6			
			6			3		8
	1	6				5	9	
2		8			3			
			4	1			8	
1				8		6		3
9	8		3				4	

Sudoku — hard 1

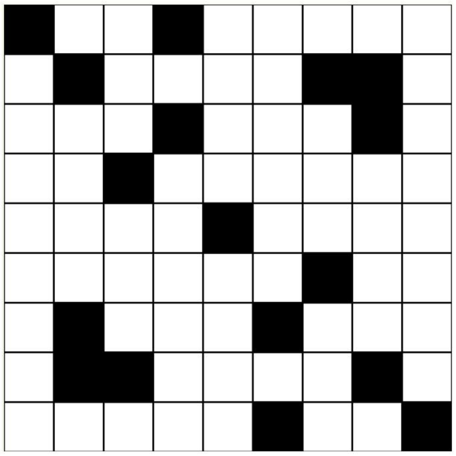
		2			3			5
			5	1	9			
7					2			
	3					7	1	6
	2						9	
1	6	5					2	
			8					3
			1	9	7			
8			2			9		

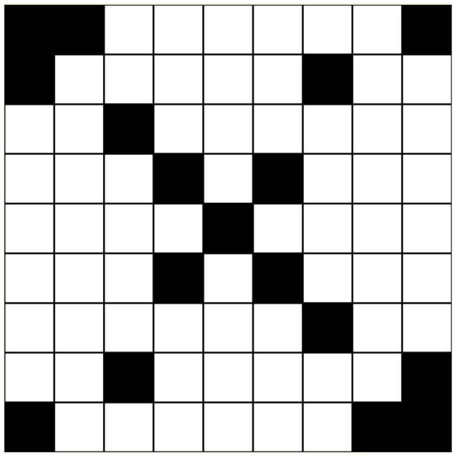
Sudoku — hard 2

		7	8					
			2			5	7	
5		3		7			4	
3	7				4			
		8				1		
			1				5	7
	1			6		3		9
	9	4			1			
					9	8		

Numberfit

Fit the listed numbers into each grid.





Numberfit 1

2 digits: 32 – 33 – 34 – 38
3 digits: 233 – 259 – 359 – 409 – 429 – 933 – 939 – 959
4 digits: 1935 – 2435 – 4345 – 4347 – 4463 – 4996 – 5488 – 7895
5 digits: 49887 – 78986
6 digits: 350144 – 350314 – 351348 – 885044
8 digits: 64343694 – 68446894

Numberfit 2

2 digits: 24 – 29 – 45 – 52 – 61 – 96
3 digits: 294 – 434 – 597 – 643 – 733 – 879 – 944 – 952
4 digits: 2843 – 2935 – 4235 – 9374 – 9472 – 9783
5 digits: 12385 – 43423
6 digits: 274539 – 284549 – 342964 – 474996 – 544341 – 572942
8 digits: 14729762 – 24638963

HOW WORDS DISAPPEAR

PETER TRUDGILL on how some 'antiquated' words drop out of use

In George Borrow's 1843 book *The Bible in Spain*, he reports one of his interlocutors, a servant, as saying to him: "Though I have been turned out of so many families, I was never turned out of that one; and though I left it thrice, it was of my own free will."

Most readers of this column will be familiar with the word *thrice*. It occurs, for instance, in the King James Bible: "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." At earlier periods of history, all English speakers would have used this word quite naturally as part of their normal everyday speech.

Nowadays, on the other hand, it is safe to say that most of us never use it. As early as 200 years ago, it had already become somewhat archaic. The most recent citation of the word in the *Oxford English Dictionary* comes from as long ago as 1859, from the decidedly uncolloquial verse of Alfred Lord Tennyson, whose *Idylls of a King* contains the line "…with some surprise and thrice as much disdain". George Borrow, too, wrote in what has been called a "pre-Victorian" style.

What we would say in modern English instead of *thrice*, of course, is *three times*. This change from *thrice* to *three times* appears to be part of a pattern.

The forms *whence* and *thence* have similarly for the most part disappeared from the language, and been replaced by *from where* and *from there*: we no longer ask "Whence have you come?" but "Where have you come from?". Similarly, *whither*, *hither* and *thither* have been replaced by *to where*, *to here* and *to there*. "Whither walkest thou?" is now expressed as "Where are you walking to?"

Linguistic analysts would say that what is happening here is that synthetic structures are being replaced by analytic structures.

To get an angle on what this means, we can consider the fact that the word *seldom* and the two-word phrase *not often* mean more or less exactly the same thing. "I seldom go" and "I don't often go" are no different from one another in terms of meaning in any significant way. The negative element of the meaning, and the frequency element of the meaning, are synthesised into the single word *seldom* while, in *not often* the two elements have been analysed out and expressed separately.

The same thing is true of *neither* and *not either*, as in "I like neither of them" and "I do not like either of them".

Again, the two different elements of meaning are combined in the single form of *neither* but are separated out in *not either*.

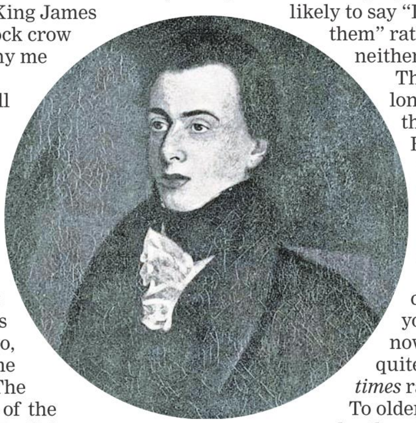
For many speakers of modern English, the analytical two-word forms feel more natural, and certainly less formal, than their synthetic equivalents.

If I am right, *seldom* is now employed less often – or more seldom! – than *not often*. And most people are probably more likely to say "I don't like either of them" rather than "I like neither of them".

This is part of a very long-running trend in the evolution of the English language in which more analytical structures are winning out over synthetic forms.

And the process continues: plenty of younger people nowadays seem to be quite happy to say *two times* rather than *twice*. To older people this can sound rather childish, but doubtless our own usage of *three times* would have sounded childish to older speakers in the 18th century when *thrice* was beginning to fall out of use. It would be interesting to see how long it takes before the surviving form *once* turns into the equivalent of French *une fois* or Norwegian *en gang*, literally 'one time'.

Possessive pronouns like *mine*, *yours* and *ours* also appear to be under threat today from potential analytical replacements: younger people are increasingly saying "That's my one!" rather than "That's mine!". This is my impression anyway – maybe your one is different.



PRE-VICTORIAN STYLE: English writer and traveller George Borrow (1803-1881). From a painting by John Borrow

Photo: Getty Images

HENCE

The word *hence* in the spatial sense of 'from here' has more or less died out in modern English and been replaced by *from here*. But it still survives in the temporal sense, as in *ten years hence*, and in the sense of 'consequently': "I'm very sleepy, hence all the coffee".

EUROFILE GREAT LIVES

MEMORABLE: Conrad Veidt as Cesare in *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari* (1920)
Photo: Getty Images

GREAT EUROPEAN LIVES

BY CHARLIE CONNELLY

#142 CONRAD VEIDT

JANUARY 22, 1893 – APRIL 3, 1943

Dr Caligari was a showman in the old-fashioned mould. Drawing a crowd by ringing a handbell outside his fairground tent, he'd then sweep his arms high and wide, cape rising with them like wings, cane held like a sceptre, and have the gathering awestruck at the prospect of seeing his remarkable protégé just the other side of the canvas. Cesare, he cried, was a 23-year-old somnambulist who had slept night and day his whole life. But if the ladies and gentlemen would be so good to step inside, he, Dr Caligari, would rouse Cesare from his slumbers for their delight and delectation.

Once on the stage Caligari hoisted back a curtain to reveal a wooden cabinet resembling a roughly-hewn, upright coffin. Opening the doors the audience beheld a tall, gaunt figure, clad head to toe in skin-tight black sweater and trousers, a shock of black hair above a pan-stick white face, all cheekbones and thick eyebrows, deep in sleep but standing supported by the dimensions of the cabinet.

Caligari commanded him to wake. There was a furrowing of the brow, barely detectable at first, then a slight grimace. And slowly, very slowly, Cesare opened his eyes. The lids kept widening until, after what seemed like an age, he wore an expression of wide-eyed astonished bewilderment at the crowd he saw before him.

The Cabinet of Dr Caligari was a landmark film when it appeared in Germany in 1920 and the relaxation of a ban on the international distribution of German pictures soon afterwards made the expressionist horror a worldwide hit. Cesare opening his eyes became one of cinema's most famous moments. The film's imaginative sets and a gripping script were memorable enough but it was the performances of the two leads that really made the film stand out; Werner Krauss as Caligari and Conrad Veidt as Cesare. So unsettling was Veidt's performance in particular that when Caligari was first shown in Berlin in February 1920, just a month after filming had finished, women screamed when Cesare opened his eyes. Later in the film when Cesare abducts the female lead there were reports of women in the audience fainting with fear. The 27-year-old Conrad Veidt had arrived.

He always had a remarkable presence whatever the role, be it on screen, on stage, or off duty altogether. Born in Berlin he had early ambitions to be a surgeon, but an appearance in a school play changed the course of his life. He adored the applause, he said later, and craved more of it. Conscripted in 1915 and sent to the Eastern Front, Veidt participated in the Battle of Warsaw until a combination of jaundice and pneumonia saw him discharged on medical grounds, leaving him free to pursue an acting career. After befriending the doorman at Max Reinhardt's Deutsches Theater in Berlin, Veidt wangled his way inside, auditioned for Reinhardt by reciting a chunk of *Faust* – the whole of which he had committed to memory – and was soon working his way up from small parts to leading roles. Indeed, so good a stage actor did he become that one critic pleaded, "I pray that this young man will never enter the films".

Christopher Isherwood summed up Veidt's charismatic presence when he saw him at an all-male costume ball at Magnus Hirshfeld's Institute for Sexual Science in 1929.

"The respectability of the ball was open to doubt, but it did have one dazzling guest: Conrad Veidt," Isherwood recalled. "The great film star sat apart at his own table, impeccable in evening tails. He watched the dancing benevolently through his monocle as he sipped champagne and smoked a cigarette in a long holder. He seemed a supernatural figure, the guardian god of these festivities, who was graciously manifesting himself to his devotees. A few favoured ones approached and talked to him but without presuming to sit down."

Veidt's presence at the ball was no surprise. He'd always embraced and exhibited the kind of tolerance that characterised the free-spirited cultural atmosphere of Weimar Germany in the 1920s. A year before his unforgettable performance as Cesare he had starred in the groundbreaking film *Anders als die Andern* ('*Different from the Others*'), a production in which Hirschfeld had a significant creative role and one containing one of the first sympathetic portrayals of homosexuals ever seen on film. Veidt's unabashed liberal values would come sharply into focus as darkness descended upon Germany during the 1930s.

The Cabinet of Dr Caligari established him as a gifted horror actor in particular, and the 1920s saw him turning in notable screen performances in German productions such as *Orlacs Hände* ('*The Hands of Orlac*') as well as portraying a range of real-life characters from Nelson to Paganini to Ivan the Terrible.

In the late-1920s he sailed for the US, scoring a notable hit in the 1928 Paul Leni silent *The Man Who Laughs*, a film adapted from a Victor Hugo novel. Veidt took the starring role of Gwynplaine, whose face was frozen in a permanent grin. Despite the rictus smile, he managed to turn in a performance of deep sensitivity that later struck a chord with the creative team at DC Comics, who used Veidt's portrayal as the basis for the Joker.

Hopes of further roles in the US were dashed by the advent of sound: Veidt's heavily accented English didn't translate to the talkie era and he returned to Germany. Despite the disappointment he was excited by the advent of sound in cinema and displayed impressive foresight on the topic to the *Berliner Tageblatt* when he arrived home. The films with sound he'd seen, he said, were "too attached to the stage".

"We must write sound films, not sound film theatre pieces," he insisted. "What today is still a hybrid must become an independent art."

In 1933 he married his third wife Ilana, who was Jewish, just as Joseph Goebbels began to focus his attention on the German entertainment industry. When film actors were presented with a 'racial questionnaire' to determine their suitability to continue working under the Third Reich, Veidt wrote that he was *Jude*, a Jew. He wasn't, but as a man virulently opposed to anti-Semitism and married to a Jew he wanted to demonstrate his solidarity. As one of the nation's best-known actors Goebbels was keen to keep Veidt on screen, telling him that if he divorced Ilana he could keep working. At that, the newlyweds packed up their belongings and went to England.

One of his first roles in his new home was the lead in the 1934 anti-Nazi film *Jew Süss*, his first English-speaking part. Six years later a German version would also appear, a hideously anti-Semitic interpretation in which Werner Krauss, who'd played Dr Caligari opposite Veidt and went on to become an enthusiastic Nazi, took several roles as grotesque Jewish stereotypes.

Not only did Veidt take out British citizenship in 1939, he donated his life savings to the British war effort. Keen to make as much of a contribution as possible, in 1941 he returned to California with a print of his film *Contraband*, hoping its distribution in the US might build support for America joining the war and ensuring the proceeds helped fund the fight against Nazism in Europe. While in Hollywood, his English now fluent, Veidt began accepting film roles as evil Nazi officers, most notably Major Heinrich Strasser in *Casablanca*.

"This role epitomizes the cruelty, criminal instincts and murderous trickery of the typical Nazi," he said of the role. "I know this man well. He is a man who turned fanatic and betrayed his friends, his homeland, and himself in his lust to be somebody and to get something for nothing."

Veidt still had much to do, both for the war effort and his career when he collapsed and died from a heart attack on a Hollywood golf course at the age of 50. It was a huge loss to the world of film, but at least in Cesare and Strasser in particular he had created two of the 20th centuries most memorable, indelible film villains. Even now, a century on, Cesare opening his eyes remains as unsettling a cinematic experience as it did to those Berlin women at the early screenings.

"It intrigues me to think there is another man abroad in the world who resembles me," Veidt told an interviewer shortly before his death. "That I can sit in this hotel room with a scotch and soda talking of him and yet that shadow of me is out there somewhere, swaying audiences in a darkened theatre with impressions of love, or hate, or deceit."

WILL SELF

Multicultural Man ..

On Covid-free Borsetshire

Is it just me, or was that really Lynda Snell shitting the bed at the end of last week's *Archers Omnibus*? Yes, yes – I know I said I'd stopped listening to the long-running Radio 4 soap opera about rural folk a month ago, but guess what: I lied. I lied about not-listening-to-the-*Archers* the way people have been lying about social distancing: I'm an exception… that's what we all think, isn't it… and I have an exceptional need to go here/get that/see her… But in my own case, now is really not the time to cut back on soap operas – now is the time to crank up the volume and positively luxuriate in soap operas – especially if, like the *Archers*, the producers have made the decision to ignore the coronavirus crisis altogether.

Yes, unlike the poor television soaps, upon which work has ceased due to the aforementioned social-distancing measures, Ambridge and its denizens remain open for business. In my previous column on the subject I said the soap was another example of the English obsession with uchronia: a time, rather than a place, that never was – a Merrie England with happily organic social relations. Now its producers have decided to ignore the biggest impact in living memory on our social relations. Borsetshire has truly become the land that time is speedily forgetting. I suppose the rationale is that if the actors can work then the drama must go on – but anyway, the *Archers* have always been averse to wider social and political happenings that can't be tidily resolved in 13-minute episodes, or directly related to mixed-arable farming.

That brings me back to Lynda Snell, and her incontinence. I'm not sure of all the details – recall, I've never listened consistently to the *Archers*, only dipped in and out – but it seems that Ambridge's cultural vulture *manqué* got badly burnt in a fire at the Grey Gables Hotel and conference centre, and now lies, mummified in bandages, in Borsetshire General Hospital. I daresay that this storyline was evolved some time ago – but it is curiously timely, either allowing the scriptwriters to subtly allude to our own pressing collective anxieties, or at least giving this listener *manqué* that impression. Hence poor Lynda's desperate appeal to the valetudinarian Peggy Archer that she should find her a nurse or a doctor – Peggy seemed wilfully obtuse about this for a while, until Lynda blurted out the ultimate English middle class solecism: "I need the bathroom!" or words to that effect.

It was impossible not to hear in her anguish, the collective pain of a people returned to their corporeal reality by the collapse of mass consumerism and its attendant supply chains, and seeking therefore to mummify themselves… in toilet paper. Moreover, Snell's incontinent yell came in the same week that Britons took to their windows, balconies, gardens and doorsteps to clap, shout, wassail – and otherwise express their admiration for all those who work for what we must, perforce, refer to now as "our" National Health Service.

Certainly, this is the way it's spoken of by the Tory ministers whose ideological asperity has resulted in the service being consistently underfunded for the past decade, leaving us less able to fight the pandemic than Lynda Snell is of getting to the bathroom unassisted. But I don't really want to indulge in some left-right ding-donging on this issue: the fact is that when it comes to "our NHS" we're all true believers. Not, of course, in the reality of the service – but rather in its espoused values, which, in the age of neo-liberalism, are altruistic to the point of seeming Christ-like: free universal healthcare, on demand. In a world in which God, if not dead yet, is definitely on a ventilator, such an exaggerated claim cannot but be spiritualised.

OUR NHS: The London Eye was illuminated to show appreciation and support for NHS staff on March 26 Photo: Getty Images

It's the universality that propels us into the mystic, I think – suggesting as it does a bedrock of egalitarianism, below which Britain cannot sink. Moreover, the 'universal' also floats freely around this proposition in our collective imagination, such that it can seem to refer not just to all comers, but also to all possible medical treatments as well. But we all know the truth: some are more equal than others even under optimal conditions – while the virus disproportionately affects those who are overweight and smokers: in other words – the poor.

Poor who are always with me nowadays – because while I may only tune into the *Archers* now and then, the silence of the surrounding city, combined with the position of my flat, with the Brixton Road a hundred yards one way, and the Clapham one a hundred yards the other, means the howls of the ambulances ferrying new coronavirus victims to Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals are quite as piercing as Lynda Snell's. It all puts me in mind of my late friend and mentor JG Ballard's observation regarding our increasingly unreal times: "For the writer in particular it is less and less necessary for him to invent the fictional content of his novel. The fiction is already there. The writer's task is to invent the reality."

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